

INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT AND
POST-DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT

By

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For Drew, Evan, and Justin,
my children of divorce

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Today more than one-half of married couples choose divorce as a solution to marital conflict. For many parents, conflict continues to be an issue long after the dissolution of marriage. In this study, the nature of parental conflict, possible gender differences in expression of conflict, and the variables that may contribute to conflict were examined in a sample of 100 parents who had been divorced a minimum of three years. Dimensions such as expression of anger, level of self-esteem, and post-divorce adjustment were examined to determine their predictive values for levels of conflict.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 randomly selected participants who described their experiences after divorce. From these interviews, the Parental Post Divorce Behavioral Checklist was devised to explore the behaviors of post-divorce parents. In the second phase, 80 parents

completed questionnaires designed to measure and describe emotional and behavioral dimensions of divorce.

Descriptive statistics of central tendency and dispersion were computed for all variables and demographic factors. Chi squares were calculated to determine associations between levels of parental conflict and gender. Dimensions of anger expression, self-esteem, and overall post-divorce adjustment were analyzed to determine the predictability of these variables for conflict tactic strategies.

Results indicated that post-divorce parental conflict continues after the three-year period. Of those in the study, 28% of the men and 43% of the women indicated their former spouses engaged in negative verbal behaviors toward the other spouse in the presence of the children. Similarly, 33% of the men and 45% of the women described subtle, brainwashing behaviors utilized by one spouse to negatively influence the children about the other spouse. Form of conflict expression was not found to vary significantly according to gender.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict the use of reasoning, verbal conflict, and violence in interparental disputes. Only self-esteem was found to be a highly significant predictor of both verbal conflict ($p=.0001$) and violence ($p=.0001$). The same model was not predictive of the use of reasoning conflict strategies.

These results indicate that greater attention should be given to the role of self-esteem in interparental conflict long after the final dissolution of marriage.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Current issues addressed by divorce researchers parallel general societal concerns and trends regarding divorce. Perhaps the two most significant trends are the increasing divorce rates in the United States and the inception of joint custody of children as a custody alternative in at least 33 states. The number of divorces has almost tripled in the last 20 years (National Center for Health Statistics, 1984), and evidence suggests that almost half the marriages of today's adults will terminate in divorce (Glick, 1984). Among those divorcing adults, 65% of the women and 70% of the men are likely to remarry (Glick & Lin, 1986; Norton & Moorman, 1987). Further, it has been projected by the Census Bureau (Glick, 1984) that 61% of the men and 54% of the women who are currently in their 30s during the 1980s will divorce twice.

In an attempt to address the needs of these divorcing families, legislators in most states have enacted laws to manage the custody aspects of divorce and thus provide options other than mother-custody for divorcing spouses. Joint custody, also referred to as shared parental responsibility in some states, is one option that has

rapidly gained support among courts and mental health professionals. Jointly sharing the child can be addressed in two ways: (a) parents may share equally the care for the child or (b) one parent may retain physical custody while the other has an equal voice on matters pertaining to the child's health, education, and welfare (Howell & Toepke, 1984). The goal of joint custody is to insure that the child has meaningful contact with both parents.

Family law experts believed that joint custody would be a mandated choice or "presumption" by most state statutes by the early 1990s (Volgy & Everett, 1985). Florida's legislature mandated shared parental responsibility as a presumption of custody type in 1982. As joint custody agreements have become more prevalent, the courts and divorce researchers are gaining more insight into the complexities of joint custody.

Currently there is a growing concern among social science researchers (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989) and the courts (Palmer, 1988; Palmer & Landis, 1989) that many divorcing spouses are emotionally unprepared or unwilling to cooperate to provide joint decision making and shared parenting for the best interest of the child. Further, professionals are currently engaged in a debate over the preference of joint custody to sole custody arrangements. Contrary to findings of earlier studies suggesting that joint custody is almost always

better for children (Elkin, 1987), several recent studies suggest that the custody arrangements are not as important for the psychological well-being of the child as is the degree of tension and conflict impacting them in their lives (Johnston, Campbell, & Tall, 1984; Kline & Johnston, 1988; Luepnitz, 1986; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Emotional Issues in Custody and Divorce

Until recently, prominent divorce and child custody researchers (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) believed that emotional distress and disrupted functioning of divorcing couples would abate within two to three years following divorce. Likewise, developmental stage theories of divorce hypothesize a sequence of feelings and behaviors similar to grief models progressing from denial to anger to depression and finally to acceptance (Crosby, Gage, & Raymond, 1983; Kaslow, 1984) within the two to three year time period. Divorce stage proponents have described the sequence of feelings and behaviors of the divorce process as encompassed in three phases: (a) predivorce decision making stage, (b) divorce restructuring stage, and (c) post-divorce recovery stage (Kaslow, 1984; Sprenkle & Storm, 1982). In addition, each individual may repeat stages, skip them, or experience them simultaneously.

Models of divorce have been proposed that focus on the emotions and experiences that each individual must resolve

in order to progress to the next stage. Most of these theoretical models that serve to illustrate the dynamics of the divorce process can be conceptualized as two dimensions: those that focus on the affective dimension and those with emphasis on the behavior/event dimension (Crosby, Gage, & Raymond, 1983).

Typical of the models emphasizing the affective dimension are the models of Weiss (1975) and Kessler (1975). Weiss (1975) described a three-phase divorce model characterized by initial feelings of shock and disbelief and progressing through sadness, anger, and loneliness toward emotional stability in the final phase. Likewise, Kessler (1975) presented a seven-stage model that designated three stages after the physical separation of the couple. These include mourning, second adolescence, and, finally, hard work. The models attempt to address both the event and the concomitant emotional response. Notice that both of these models postulate stages similar to those of adjustment to loss (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

In contrast, Kaslow (1984) asserted that, while emphasis on the emotional domain is important, there is a need for a more comprehensive model that includes behaviors and therapeutic implications. Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) proposed a dialectic conceptual framework that organizes behavioral dynamics, stage theory, and the emotional responses to divorce. Their attempt to synthesize the

models into the dialectic model highlighted in Table 1. This model includes temporal sequence, stations of divorce, intrapsychic dimensions, behaviors/events, and therapeutic implications. The temporal sequence of stages is predivorce, during divorce, and post-divorce. Concomitant feelings are described as those progressing from anxiety, disillusionment and disbelief through shock, low self-esteem, loss, confusion, relief, vindictiveness, regret, and sadness toward acceptance, self-confidence, energy, wholeness, independence and autonomy. Salts (1985), in a review of the literature, emphasized the comprehensiveness of the dialectic model of Kaslow (1984) because of the focus on therapeutic implications.

It is apparent that there is variance among the divorce stage theorists in their perspectives of the divorce process. However, common to all models is the expectation that there will be an ending to the emotional and behavioral reactions to divorce. For this study, the stage most relevant for the examination of post-divorce interparental conflict is that of the post-divorce recovery stage. Characteristic of the notion of divorce recovery, Sprenkle and Storm (1982) suggested that during the post-divorce stage the divorce process can become a source of personal growth for the parents as each attempts to discover the self by assessing and clarifying values, goals, and needs.

Table 1

Adaptation of Kaslow's Dialectic Model of Divorce

Stage	Station	Feelings	Actions/Tasks
Predivorce	1. emotional divorce	disillusionment dissatisfaction alienation despair dread anguish ambivalence shock emptiness anger chaos inadequacy low self-esteem	avoid issues sulk/cry confront partner quarreling denial withdrawal pretending try to win back affection asking advice
	2. legal divorce	loss depression detachment anger	bargaining screaming threatening
During divorce		hopelessness self-pity helplessness	attempting suicide consulting an attorney
	3. economic divorce	confusion fury sadness	separation filing for legal divorce economic issues custody issues
	4. coparental divorce/ custody	loneliness relief vindictiveness empowerment	grieving/mourning tell relatives re-enter work issues
	5. community divorce	indecisiveness optimism loneliness resignation excitement	finalize divorce new friends new activities stabilize new relationships
Post-divorce		curiosity regret sadness	new life experiences explore new interests
	6. psychic divorce	acceptance self-confidence energy self-worth wholeness exhilaration independence autonomy	new identity seek new love object permanency comfortable with new life/friends help children accept divorce

Recent studies by Johnston and Campbell (1988) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) do not, however, support this view. Particularly noteworthy is the discrepancy between the temporal sequence and the continued feeling and expression of anger for many divorced adults well after the three-year period within which resolution of the post-divorce issues should occur. In fact, Wallerstein (1986), reported that 44% of the women and 20% of the men in her original study remained intensely angry a full decade later. She noted that the incidence of angry adults at the 10-year follow-up did not differ significantly from the marital bitterness at the time of the original study.

In the most recent 10-year follow-up of a longitudinal study of 60 middle class divorcing families (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989), it was determined that for half of the women and men who participated in the study, anger and interparental conflict continued to be an ever-present factor in the aftermath of divorce. A decade later, intense bitterness and competition for the loyalty of the children and stress over the children's contact with the other parent were prevalent issues. This finding of enduring conflict is particularly noteworthy as the sample for Wallerstein's (1989) original study excluded families with high interparental conflict.

Johnston and Campbell (1988), studying 80 families with high-conflict in the aftermath of divorce, reported

similar rates of conflict. They indicated that one-third of divorced parents in their sample remained hostile and embittered many years subsequent to divorce. It is interesting to note that, in their study of high conflict families, only 15% of the parents had diagnoses associated with hostile personality disorders such as an intermittent explosive disorder or an impulse-control disorder. Thus, they contended that the anger post-divorce is interactionally based and not an expression of psychopathology (Johnston & Campbell, 1988). These studies do not support the temporal stage models of divorce. Thus, stage theories may need reexamination, particularly regarding the expectation of emotional resolution within a concise temporal sequence.

Both Johnston and Campbell (1988) and Gardner (1987) have formulated their own concepts to explain the enduring level of conflict after divorce. Johnston and Campbell (1988) proposed the concept of the divorce impasse in which parents utilize conflict to manage loss, anger, rejection, and helplessness. They suggested that this conflict may be fueled by extended family, new partners, attorneys, and mental health professionals and, at times, may be directed through the child to the other parent or toward the child by developing an intense emotional dependence on the child.

Gardner (1987) attempted to explain the interparental conflict after divorce by describing a set of behaviors that he termed Parental Alienation Syndrome. He defined Parental Alienation Syndrome as a disturbance in the children that is primarily promulgated by their parents. The syndrome is characterized by the child becoming so polarized in his or her views of the parents that one parent is viewed in the eyes of the child as the "loved parent" and one as the "hated" parent. The child will denigrate and criticize the "hated" parent. Further, Gardner (1987) implies that, in this syndrome, one parent systematically and consciously programs the child to denigrate the other parent, as well as subconsciously and unconsciously affecting the child to contribute to the alienation. Examples of programming include disparaging remarks made by one parent about the other parent, the neutrality of one parent toward the relationship of the child with the other parent, threats or arguments in the presence of the child, or inferences by one parent that the other parent should not be trusted to know the whereabouts of the child and parent.

Gardner's (1987) notion of parental alienation syndrome has been recognized by the legal system in cases such as *Schutz v. Schutz*, 1985; *French v. French*, 1984; and *Gardner v. Gardner*, 1986. These cases include testimony and legal opinions regarding the nature and effects of

parental conflict and Parental Alienation Syndrome. Although Gardner (1987) has seemed to describe many therapists' experiences with divorcing families, he lacks empirical evidence to support the syndrome.

Emotional Origins of Conflict

Wallerstein (1986) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) contended that anger is at the root of parental conflict and is embedded in the sense of having been exploited and rejected. The rejection fosters feelings of hurt and humiliation many years after the divorce. Some women, according to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), experience increased loneliness that may be linked to their age at the onset of divorce and continued anxiety about single parenting and living alone. Men, on the other hand, not only experience rejection and loneliness, but also fear and anger about the contact that they are able to have with their children.

In an attempt to clarify post-divorce conflicts, Johnston and Campbell (1988) characterized them as two basic types: (a) separation-engendered conflicts that are associated with rejection, loneliness, helplessness and depression and (b) narcissistic vulnerability associated with threats to self-esteem. Separation-engendered conflicts are those that encompass the humiliation inherent in rejection, the grief associated with loss, and the overall helplessness in response to assaultive life changes

thrust upon both parties (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). These changes, in addition to the individual vulnerabilities, make it more difficult to cope with the trauma of the divorce experience.

For many divorcing spouses, however, divorce involves a narcissistic threat to self-esteem and to the image of one's self as spouse or parent. For those who experience divorce as an assault on self, the need to use others to regulate low self esteem may be evident. A custody dispute may provide such a defense of self against the sense of failure, rejection and humiliation engendered by the divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). It is important to note, however, that there has not yet been adequate exploration of the specific behaviors associated with these conflicts, nor has conclusive evidence been provided regarding the origin of the conflict.

Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) described the threat to self-esteem as the result of experiencing feelings of failure and rejection by not only one's former spouse but also friends and neighbors. In addition, there is a societal expectation that the divorcing spouses may grieve overtly for a brief time, but are soon to keep feelings of sadness and anger private. In addition, the pain of the divorced spouses may be perceived to challenge the marriages of those in close proximity.

Johnston and Campbell (1988) contended that contributors to this conflict are not only separation-engendered conflicts and narcissistic vulnerabilities but also conflict tactic style. Conflict tactics are the range of behaviors utilized by parents to express disagreement with one another. Johnston and Campbell (1988) asserted that conflicts vary in styles ranging from one parent's resistance during the negotiation of the settlement agreement, avoidance of one another, or bitter acrimony to angry confrontation and explosive violence. The most prevalent form of active dispute by parents is verbal abuse characterized by insulting, belittling, demeaning interchanges occurring on the average of once a week either on the telephone or when transferring the child from one home to another.

Statement of the Problem

Divorce has become endemic to the American society (Peck & Manocherian, 1989). Today over one-half of married couples will choose divorce as a solution to marital conflict. Recently there has been considerable research on the impact of divorce on all family members. Sociologists, mental health professionals, and the legal system have all attempted to address post-divorce adjustment and custodial issues.

Authors of two recent major research studies have indicated high rates of conflict prevailing during the

post-divorce period (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). These researchers suggested that conflict behaviors are associated with a myriad of feelings experienced by the divorcing spouses with emphasis on anger, threats to self-esteem, loss, and rejection. It is important to obtain more information about the actual nature of post-divorce disputes and the role of emotional factors in maintaining a high level of conflict.

This new evidence of extended periods of post-divorce conflict raises two other questions as well. First, what are the dimensions of overall post-divorce adjustment? Second, how are the affective dimensions manifested in the interparental conflicts of divorced parents? Luepnitz (1986), in a study on custody type and post-divorce conflict, found that when parents remained embattled after divorce, each parent's rate of post-divorce adjustment lessened and conflict persisted. In addition, there is literature in which it is suggested that anger is demonstrated by brainwashing of the child by one or both parents, subtle parental programming of the child, or even the neutral expression by one parent regarding the importance of the parent-child relationship with the other parent.

There is at present no empirical evidence to clearly describe the nature of interparental conflict post-divorce or how the conflict may be expressed (Gardner, 1987;

Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Questions about the individual adjustment of parents when post-divorce conflict continues are raised as a result of the current research. It is also unknown what personality characteristics and intrapsychic variables are associated with high interparental conflict or the way in which children may be victims of the conflicts as a result of the behaviors of their parents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, it was designed to increase understanding of the nature of post-divorce conflict by describing the range of parental behaviors associated with the conflict. A second purpose was to explore relationships between the type of expression of anger, the amount of self-esteem, the conflict tactic style, the post-divorce adjustment of parents, and the amount of interparental conflict demonstrated by parents.

Research Questions

This study was focused on parental conflict three years following legal divorce. The research questions answered and the hypotheses tested are listed below.

1. What is the extent of the expression of interparental conflict in the post-divorce period three years or more following a legal divorce?
 - a. What is the frequency of the expression of the conflict?

- b. What are the range of behaviors exhibited during the conflict?
- 2. Is there an association between gender and conflict tactic strategies?
 - a. Is there an association between gender and reasoning conflict tactic strategies?
 - b. Is there an association between gender and verbal conflict tactic strategies?
 - c. Is there an association between gender and violent conflict tactic strategies?
- 3. Can parental conflict tactic styles be predicted from knowledge of levels of anger expression, self-esteem, and overall post-divorce adjustment?

Importance of the Study

Despite the prevalence of divorce over the last decade, the traumatic impact for parents and their children has not lessened. This impact also has a reverberative effect on the extended family and the social systems in which the family lives. During the divorce process the family interacts with a network of professionals in an attempt to dissolve the conflicted marriage. These professionals may include mental health professionals, attorneys, judges, guardians ad litem or mediators.

This study was an attempt to provide needed information about the post-divorce adjustment period for these families. Further, by clarifying emotional and

behavioral factors demonstrated during this period, the study provided information for counselors to develop appropriate and timely interventions for families in divorce transition. Information about the extent and intensity of the conflict was needed as family practitioners and judges frequently have not examined their roles in the ongoing conflict of divorce. As a result, the professionals can exacerbate the conflict for families. Ironically, parents and the professionals who serve them may be caught in a battle "in the best interest of the children" but, as a result, inflict additional emotional pain on the very persons they are trying to protect (Johnston & Campbell, 1988). For this reason, parental conflict must be addressed by the policymakers of family law as well as the psychological experts so that efforts to ameliorate acrimony and bitterness between parents during the post-divorce adjustment may be made. California's legislature, in an attempt to address the issue of parental conflict within shared custody, voted to make "neither a preference nor a presumption" for joint custody (Cal. Civ. Code Sec. 4600 (d) (West Supp. 1989)). Consequently, the new information on interparental conflict and the results of that conflict have already begun to effect change in legal policy. In addition, the results of this study suggested an extended need post-divorce for such

professional services as mediation, conciliation services, and parent education.

The need for psychological and legal assistance is clearly present (Gardner, 1987; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Kaslow, 1987; Palmer, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The types of assistance necessary may be better defined when the problem of prolonged conflict is understood. An initial step is to explore dimensions of anger expression, self-esteem, conflict tactic style and general post-divorce adjustment so that they can be examined as variables for determining levels of parental conflict after divorce. If there is not a relationship of these dimensions to parental conflict, then other explanations for the behaviors associated with conflict must be explored.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study:

Anger is the emotional state comprised of feelings varying in intensity from mild annoyance to fury and rage and is accompanied by arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Spielberger, 1988).

Anger-in is the frequency with which angry feelings are held in or suppressed (Spielberger, 1988).

Anger-out is the expression of anger toward other people or objects in the environment (Spielberger, 1988).

Conflict tactics are the behaviors demonstrated by parents during disputes ranging from verbal threats and

denigration to physical acts of violence perpetrated by one or both spouses (Straus, 1979).

Divorce is the cessation of the marital agreement between two persons including a legal dissolution as well as emotional disentanglement by each party (Fisher, 1976).

Interparental conflict is a style of dispute or conflict for parents ranging from behaviors of mild disagreement to overt, hostile behaviors (Johnston, Campbell, & Tall, 1985).

Post-divorce adjustment is the degree to which individuals are able to negotiate the emotional, behavioral, and temporal stages of divorce while preserving their self-esteem (Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987).

Self-esteem is the degree to which a person's experience and environment are consistent with a positive concept of self (Fisher, 1976).

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study will be presented in four chapters. In Chapter II, the related literature will be reviewed and analyzed. In Chapter III, the methodology of the study will be presented, including a description of the population and sample, the sampling procedure, the instruments, the data collection and scoring procedures, and the proposed data analysis. In Chapter IV, the results of the study will be presented. Finally, Chapter V will

present a discussion of the results, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In Chapter II, a summary and an analysis of the professional literature involving divorce adjustment and interparental conflict are presented. The chapter is divided into four major sections: (a) divorce adjustment and developmental stage theories; (b) conflict theory and dynamics; (c) custody, legal implications, and the court system; and (d) interparental conflict and post-divorce adjustment. The chapter concludes with a summary and implications of previous research as it relates to this study.

Stages of Adjustment

Divorce is a process resulting from increased dissatisfaction with the marital relationship that involves individual and couple decisions, changes, and adjustments (Salts, 1985). Further, the divorce process has often been defined as consisting of stages that individuals and couples experience (Bohannon, 1970; Kaslow, 1984; Kessler, 1975; Weiss, 1975) over a two- to three-year period ending in some level of homeostasis (Ahrons, 1980a; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). In an attempt to explicate the divorce experience, efforts have

been made to develop divorce stage theories that include the emotions of the individuals, the actions and tasks of individuals and couples, time sequencing, and therapeutic implications (Kaslow, 1984; Price-Bonham & Balswick, 1980; Salts, 1979). These divorce stage models focus on emotions and experiences that each partner must resolve in order to progress to the next stage. The stages allow for individual differences as each individual may repeat stages, skip them, or experience them simultaneously. Further, the models illustrate that the order, intensity, and duration may vary from person to person while emotions experienced during a particular stage may resurface in other stages or during intense crisis periods in the lives of the divorced family. Crosby, Gage, and Raymond (1983) indicated that there is a large degree of variance in the experiences of any two divorcing partners and that these experiences are marked by circularity rather than linearity. In other words, there is not a beginning or an ending. Thus, issues will be addressed and readdressed throughout the process.

There are several models that describe the developmental stages of divorce. Overall, the models are congruent with each other. Differences between the models are generally in terms of points of emphasis and on the inception and termination of each phase.

Cohen (1982), in a review of the literature, asserted that the model presented by Spanier and Casto (1979) is the most effective for separating the major tenets of the overall process for parents. Spanier and Casto (1979) suggested that there are two phases of adjustment to divorce: (a) adjustment to marital dissolution and (b) adjustment to a new life style. These two phases coincide with the time sequencing stages of divorce restructuring and post-divorce recovery described by Kaslow (1984) and Sprenkle and Storm (1982). Relevant models for this study will be organized according to the behavior/event and the affective dimensions described by Crosby, Gage, and Raymond (1983) and the systemic perspectives of Kaslow (1984) and Peck and Manocherian (1989). In addition, attention will be paid to the time sequencing stages described by Kaslow (1984) and Sprenkle and Storm (1982).

Behavior/Event Stage Models

One behavior/event model descriptive of the divorce process is that of Bohannon's (1970) notion of six stations of divorce. Spanier and Casto (1979) evaluated Bohannon's (1970) stations of divorce within each of their adjustment stages. These six stations were (a) emotional divorce that includes the withdrawal of emotional involvement and has its onset before separation, (b) legal divorce or the final judicial decree, (c) economic divorce, which occurs when spouses establish separate finances and households, (d)

coparental divorce or the separation of the parents from each other but not from the child, (e) community divorce or the disengagement from couple friends, and (f) psychic divorce which addresses the autonomy of self from the former spouse. Most of the events occur during the adjustment to marital dissolution (Spanier & Casto, 1979); however, there is a progression toward the psychic divorce which implies the adjustment to a new life style. Bohannon (1970) stated that these experiences may overlap and occur in different orders. Thus, in each stage the issues are addressed and readdressed.

Similarly, Kessler (1975), from a survey of approximately 230 divorced persons from 1969-1973, presented seven stages of emotional adjustment with emphasis on the event dimension of the divorce process. These include (a) disillusionment, (b) erosion, (c) detachment, (d) physical separation, (e) mourning, (f) second adolescence, and (g) hard work. Physical separation is the most traumatic stage in the divorce process, according to Kessler (1975), as the shift from predivorce to post-divorce issues occur. Now both spouses must face loneliness, anxiety, and confusion while feelings of betrayal, abandonment, guilt, anger and fear surface. After separation, mourning is the next stage which is essential as the individual needs to grieve the death of the marriage. During this stage anger becomes unleashed

for most individuals. Anger may be directed toward the former spouse or toward self and may take the form of depression. This stage is critical because the individual must experience these feelings to prepare for the second adolescence.

The second adolescence stage provides for the divorcing individuals a sense of exploration of self, restoration and relief that the conflict is over. Finally, the hard work period enables the individuals to pursue new goals and relationships. Only after the hard work stage are most people ready and able to enter into a long-term committed relationship or capable of deciding that they prefer to be single (Kessler, 1975). Clearly, Kessler's model describes post-divorce anger as an emotion contained in the mourning stage of adjustment and an emotion that is resolved before progressing to the hard work stage of restoration. The hard work stage signifies an ending to the divorce process. While Kessler's stages have utility as an informative source for persons experiencing divorce, the presumption that the stages are emotion-contained and are resolved at a given point is outdated. Further, parental conflict associated with individual post-divorce adjustment is not addressed.

Another model emphasizing the behavior/event dimension is a model suggested by Turner (1980). This model, according to Kaslow (1984), is confined to an analysis of

stages in mid-life divorce. The model is unique in that it is descriptive of divorced individuals who grew up and married when values and practices were different (pre-1960). The six stage model is characterized as follows: (a) disenchantment, (b) intrapsychic conflict, (c) decision-making stage, (d) social transition stage, (e) restabilization and growth, and (f) post-divorce adjustment. Turner (1980) focused little on the legal and economic aspects of divorce and moved instead through the social transition stage before restabilization and successful post-divorce adjustment. Like Bohannon (1970) and Kessler (1975), Turner (1980) implied an ending to the post-divorce adjustment period with self-growth for each divorced person. His unique contribution, however, is that he provided information on a subgroup of the divorced who experience particular concerns regarding finances, employment, and the negotiation of major life events regarding their children, but do not require ongoing negotiation and parental involvement to jointly raise their children.

Affective Stage Models

Typical of the models emphasizing the affective dimension is the model proposed by Weiss (1975). Weiss hypothesized three phases of the divorce process. The first phase is typically initiated in the predivorce period and is characterized by feelings of shock and numbness. In

addition, there may be a sense of unreality and denial about the impending event. Individuals enter the transition phase where relationship patterns are disrupted. This phase is typified by intense emotional reactions reflected by fluctuations from sadness and loneliness to frantic excitability. In addition, anger and loss of self-esteem are prevalent. Indecisiveness and confusion prevail until a more stable pattern of life begins to emerge. The transition phase, according to Weiss (1975), lasts about one year and is followed by the recovery phase. Self-doubt and fragility lead to emotional resilience and stability. Individuals are then able to love themselves and others again and are adjusted to a new post-divorce lifestyle.

Weiss (1975) developed his model from information obtained in structured interviews of individuals involved in Parents Without Partners and from information gathered from participants in seminars for the separated. Length of time separated or divorced was not controlled in these surveys. It appears that this model was developed from information obtained from newly separated individuals who were unable to describe the long-term effects of divorce. Further, Weiss (1975) proposed emotion-contained phases with divorce recovery within a two- to three-year time period.

There are obvious parallels between the emotional adjustment stages proposed by Weiss (1975) and the grief

resolution model of Kubler-Ross (1969). Based on a small sample of 17 divorced persons Crosby, Gage, and Raymond (1983) also applied the grief model to divorce resolution and suggested a conceptual model based on three chronological stages: (a) first serious thought to separation and/or filing, (b) separation and/or filing to final decree, and (c) final decree to penultimate closure. Within each stage are included the emotional phases of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Although the implication of circularity rather than linearity is made by the researchers, the temporal sequence of emotions and post-divorce resolution is not addressed. In fact, the notion of emotional resolution implied in these models was first proposed by Kubler-Ross (1969). Her grief model has utility for describing the emotional sequence for divorcing individuals; however, what is not described are the long-term effects of divorce on parents.

Systemic Stage Models

Kaslow (1984), like Bohannon (1970), described a more generalized stage sequence than did Weiss (1975) or Kessler (1975). While the emotional domain is crucial for healthy post-divorce adjustment, Kaslow (1984) asserted that a more comprehensive model that includes behaviors and therapeutic interventions is needed. Further, she proposed a dialectic model of post-divorce adjustment that draws from behavioral dynamics and stage theory. The model describes

a synthesis of the emotional stages and the behavioral tasks to be accomplished if successful resolution is to be achieved during the divorce process.

Kaslow's model is similar to the three temporal stages of post-divorce described by Crosby, Gage, and Raymond (1983) and Sprenkle and Storm (1982). Further, Kaslow (1984) has extended the notion of the sequential feelings and behaviors characteristic of the post-divorce phases and prescribed appropriate therapeutic interventions for each stage in the model (Table 1). Salts (1985) evaluated the dialectic model of Kaslow (1984) in a review of the literature of divorce stages and appropriate therapeutic implications. Salts (1985) agreed with Kaslow that therapeutic interventions are a necessary part of divorce stage theory and asserted that a therapist must assess the couple's relationship and the individual's emotional reactions within the context of the appropriate stage. Further, she described the divorce process as one marked by circularity rather than linearity and, likewise, the divorce therapy process.

Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) have conducted one study to describe a more comprehensive, systemic model. In their study of 73 adults post-divorce, the mean length of time divorced for respondents was 13.37 years. This time frame exceeds those described by Kessler (1975), Weiss (1975) or Crosby, Gage, and Raymond (1983). The authors suggested

that parents have conflicting feelings of yearning for the former spouse as well as anger or hatred at that person, but must mute those hostilities for the best interest of the children. However, these researchers did not address the long-term emotional effects of divorce within the context of parental harmony and/or parental conflict, nor did they address adequately the resolution stage of divorce for those conflicted adults.

Similar to the dialectic model (Kaslow, 1984; Salts, 1985) is the family systems approach described by Peck and Manocherian (1989). These authors drew from the studies of Ahrons (1981) and Hetherington et al. (1977). Ahron's (1981) study, as part of the "Coparental Divorce Research Project" at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, focused on the parental relationship of 108 divorced parents at the one year post-divorce period. Hetherington et al. (1977), in their longitudinal study of 144 divorced parents and their children, compared differences in the experiences of divorced families with the experiences of intact families.

Peck and Manocherian (1989) proposed a contextual approach of interrelated factors including age, sex, length of marriage, family life cycle stage, initial psychological stability, quality of post-separation life, education, socioeconomic status, ethnic context, prior experiences with stress, and external support. Moreover, they described the process of divorce as a transition that is

gradual, often with one spouse struggling with the idea of divorce as a solution for marital dissatisfaction and ending when the family has restabilized.

The first and second stages are Individual Cognition and preseparation or Family Metacognition which are defined as predivorce stages. Likewise, the third stage is System Separation in which the actual separation occurs. This phase is characterized by anger, helplessness, loneliness, frustration, and identity problems. Support from family and friends is crucial at this stage. In fact, Hetherington et al. (1977) contended that the overall adjustment will be faster if there is more social interaction. The fourth stage is System Reorganization and involves the clarification of new boundaries as the family attempts to organize a binuclear family structure. Boundaries refer to the formulation of new family rules and to the inclusion and exclusion of new family members and support persons. Moreover, as the divorcing couple attempts to terminate the marital relationship and maintain the parenting role, much confusion ensues (Ahrons & Wallisch, 1986). The roles of coparent and former spouse are new and not clearly defined. Thus, all members of the family experience the disruption. The fifth stage of System Redefinition begins when the family has resolved the tasks of the previous stages and is newly defined (Peck & Manocherian, 1989). The adjustment process takes place

over a period of two to three years. In fact, these authors contend that the first year is the most difficult, with 95% of the parents in the studies reporting that their feelings changed considerably in the year after divorce.

Stages four and five are similar to the post-divorce periods described by Kaslow (1984), Weiss (1975), and Turner (1980) and the hard work stage postulated by Kessler (1975). All are congruent in the characterization of the emotional and behavioral tasks indicative of the stages.

The systemic model proposed by Peck and Manocherian (1989) provides the most comprehensive model thus far and draws from the research on parental interaction as well as individual stage theories (Ahrons, 1981; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988). However, the model does not address the long-term issues for divorced parents, particularly on the topic of ongoing interparental conflict.

In conclusion, stage theories are currently in question. In recent writings, authors challenge the time frame of two to three years to complete a successful divorce adjustment and question whether the behaviors and feelings associated with that adjustment have been examined adequately (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). In fact, Kolvezon and Gottlieb (1983) cautioned that although dimensions of emotional adjustment to divorce such as feelings of anger, depression and self-concept have been identified, there is little evidence to

suggest the intensity or duration of these feelings or to predict which divorce period will evidence the feelings. In addition, Johnston and Campbell (1988) emphasized the ability of each partner to resolve conflict during the marriage as a key factor in the resolution of the divorce process. Johnston and Campbell (1988) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), while they concurred with developmental stage theories, extended the notion to suggest that for some partners, anger, depression and conflict occur many years post-divorce. For some, the emotions manifested during a particular stage may resurface beyond the recovery or adjustment stages or during intense crisis periods in the lives of the divorced family.

Studies on the Post-divorce Period

There are four major studies that address the divorce and adjustment period after marital disruption. These include a follow-up study conducted by Hetherington and Clingempeel (1988), a pioneering study of high conflict families post-divorce conducted by Johnston and Campbell (1988), a survey of divorced/separated adults and their children by Kaslow and Schwartz (1987), and a 10-year follow-up study described by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). All raise important issues about the validity of the temporal sequence of the stage theory models of divorce.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1976, 1977) conducted a longitudinal study that focused on familial interaction, including mother-father post-divorce patterns (Cohen, 1982). They examined 96 white, middle class families, half divorced and half intact. Their multimethod, multimeasure research included structured parent interviews, home and laboratory observations, and a personality scale battery. The quality of the relationship with the former spouse was assessed by ratings based on the structured interview.

Hetherington et al. (1977) found differences between divorced and intact couples in self-concept and emotional adjustment. Intact couples were rated higher on self-concept and emotional adjustment than were divorced parents. However, these differences between the two groups decreased markedly one to two years following divorce. Upon evaluation of the interactions between divorced partners, Hetherington et al. (1977) noted that at two months post-divorce, 66% of parental interchanges involved conflict. Further, conflict decreased over time ending with parental adjustment at the two- to three-year mark. In addition, Hetherington et al. (1977) found that positive perceptions of the former spouse were associated with better family functioning. Thus, negative attitudes or behaviors between parents were associated with poor functioning. Finally, Hetherington and Clingempeel (1988), based on the conclusions generated from the data in a six

year follow-up study, proposed that the relationship between the parents affects the parents' well-being and the adjustment of their children.

In a similar post-divorce study, Johnston and Campbell (1988) initially interviewed 80 families during 1982-1984. A two year follow-up was conducted from 1984-1986. The parents had been separated on the average of two years, three months after a mean marriage duration of 6.7 years. The families reflected the racial mix in California and were of varied occupational status. Approximately 40% of the partners were involved with a new relationship at the time of the follow up interview. From this study as well as from clinical experiences Johnston and Campbell (1988) concluded that one-third of the divorced parents remained bitter and hostile several years after separation. In addition, they developed the concept of the divorce transition impasse as a way to describe the long-term conflict. They believed that conflict is a method to manage feelings of loss, helplessness and anger. Finally, as part of their discussion they suggested that the trauma of divorce may be exacerbated by the professionals who profess to help these conflicted families, extended family members, and new partners.

Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) surveyed 73 well-educated, Caucasian, divorced adults about post-divorce issues for families. An open-ended questionnaire was sent to

participants obtained from an outpatient clinical population, the staff, faculty, and alumni of a northeastern university, divorced acquaintances of the researchers, and participants in a mediation workshop. Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) found that, for some of the younger respondents, a relationship with the former spouse may continue in the form of calling each other on the phone, sharing feelings and going to dinner together as friends. Other couples continue the old battles in front of the children while some remarry as a way in which to move ahead only to be haunted by memories of the former spouse. Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) asserted that most individuals did move on from the phase of grief, hostility, depression, guilt feelings and trauma to a reorganized lifestyle. This study was extremely limited in validity due to lack of a control group, the unstructured data collection and a volunteer, nonrepresentative sample.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study conducted on post-divorce adjustment has been a longitudinal study by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and the follow-up conducted by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). The qualitative focus of their study emphasized the need to understand the complexity and variation endemic to the long-term divorce process (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). The original study included 60 families, who were studied extensively over a six-week period near the time of separation. In the

follow-up study, each member was reexamined at 18 months post-separation, 5 years post-separation, and 10 years post-separation. Separation was defined as the time that the parents physically separated and remained physically and permanently apart. Of the original families, 88% were white, and 3% black, with the remaining 9% interracial. They were a well-educated group with middle class status. The choice of research designs included coding schemas, semistructured clinical interviews, and global measures of outcome developed by combining two codes derived in the initial procedure.

Based on the data collected, profiles were developed to reflect combinations of parent characteristics within each divorced couple, including patterns of psychological change, quality of life, socioeconomic status, conflict and anger, and attitudes toward the former spouse (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). At the 5-year mark, 20% of the women still viewed the divorce as a negative experience with ongoing feelings of anger or loss. In fact, the women tended to be more angry and less friendly than their former husbands. The researchers concluded that the impact of divorce must be evaluated separately for each person and what may be successful for one person may not be successful for another. At the 10-year mark, most families surprisingly were still in crisis. Turmoil and distress had not subsided and most had not gotten their lives

reordered. Many adults continued to feel angry and rejected. The reverberative effect of divorce also impacted feelings in friends, neighbors, extended family, teachers, clergy, and others. Thus, according to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), the radical changes as a result of divorce affect all families, parents, and marriages and silently alter the social fabric of our entire society.

In conclusion, there is limited research on the emotional adjustment and behavioral patterns of individuals during the post-divorce period. Studies ranging from 1975-1988 reflect similar findings regarding divorce adjustment. Earlier studies of Ahrons (1981), Kessler (1975), and Weiss (1975) were based on samples of divorced adults within a specific time frame of one to three years. There appears to be insufficient evidence of the emotional and behavioral patterns of those divorced parents long after the divorce. Recent studies indicated that anger, bitterness, and parental conflict continues to persist 10 years after divorce (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). It is unknown how the conflict is expressed and what feelings are associated with the persistent conflict. This information must be obtained before appropriate intervention strategies may be implemented by professionals to ameliorate post-divorce parental functioning.

Conflict Theory and Dynamics

The study of the variability of human conflict has increasingly been the focus of both theorists and researchers of social science (Wall & Nolan, 1987). In addition, in the past 20 years, assumptions have shifted from "how do we resolve conflict" to "how can it be purposely utilized and productively managed" (Coser, 1956; Deutsch, 1969; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Consistent with this view is the accepted notion that conflict is an inevitable part of human existence. Furthermore, conflict situations arise due to the functional independence required for cooperation and joint decision-making (Wall & Nolan, 1987). Although these premises are widely accepted, there is less agreement on definitions of conflict and how conflict occurs.

No one model of conflict is sufficient to explore all facets of human conflict. Thus, marital and divorce conflict will be explored in this study from a multidimensional perspective. Deutsch (1969) argued that conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. Other theorists offer orientations that focus on behaviors that interfere with the goal attainment of each party involved in the interaction (Boulding, 1962). Thomas (1976) extended the notion by positing that conflict begins with a perceptual difference and includes emotions,

behaviors, and outcomes. In addition, conflict may be defined on a continuum of responses that range from mild disagreement to violent conflict (Smith, 1971; Rapoport, 1974).

In a review of the literature, Putnam and Jones (1982) concluded that part of the conceptual problem is that there are many definitions and uses of the term "conflict." They proposed that the conceptual orientations be divided into two types: motive-centered and action-centered. Motive-centered definitions view psychological states as the central focus for understanding conflict, whereas action-centered orientations view behavior as central. Lippitt (1982) suggested that regardless of the motivation or outcome, conflict is destructive if it goes too far.

Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed five conflict management styles that may be applied to marital or divorcing couples. These styles include forcing, confronting, smoothing, avoiding, and compromising. Thomas (1976) suggested a similar orientation that included behaviors categorized as competitive, sharing, avoidant, and collaborative. Sillars, Coletti, Rogers, and Parry (1982) extended the notions of Blake and Mouton (1964) and Thomas (1976) and described a coding scheme of conflict tactics based on empirical data and relevant literature (Wall & Nolan, 1987). The first category, avoidance, includes tactics that minimize explicit discussion of

conflicts. The second and third dimensions include the dimensions labeled by Thomas (1976) as distributive and integrative (Wall & Nolan, 1987). Distributive tactics are verbally competitive in nature, while the integrative tactics are verbally cooperative behaviors that pursue favorable resolution of conflict for both parties.

Consistent with the motivation centered orientations is the literature contending that perceptions are critical to understand the construct of conflict. Equity theory provides the conceptual framework to link perception to the behaviors of conflict (Adams, 1965; Levi-Straus, 1964; Murstein, Wadlin, & Bond, 1987). Equity theorists argue that an individual's perception of fairness in the relationship is determined by an appraisal of the outcomes perceived by the parties. In addition, inequitable beliefs produce psychological tension and provide a context for conflict. Thus, if an inequitable perception exists, the individual will act to alter the situation.

The research on relationships has drawn attention to various forms of conflict and confirms that disagreement and conflict are common in marriage. Exchange theorists have demonstrated how conflict arises when one partner to a relationship is dissatisfied with the exchange achieved, and how hostility may be used as the ultimate bargaining move (Scanzoni, 1979). Exchange theory as applied to interpersonal relationships submits that motivation is the

central focus of conflict (Murstein et al., 1987).

Moreover, if one partner perceives inequity, the other may attribute a less than altruistic motive for their action (Murstein et al., 1987). In addition, it is suggested that the relationship is maintained by the provision of rewards on both sides. Some of the rewards include money, goods, services, love, status, and information (Argyle & Furnham, 1983). It is important to clarify that the same equity theory might be conceptualized for relationships of divorced couples as well as for married couples. Of interest, then, is the need to understand how conflicts arise and how they are resolved with a minimum of dissatisfaction by both parties.

Attribution theorists attempt to address perceptual perspectives of conflict as they study meanings and perceptions of phenomena (Madden & Bulman, 1981). Like exchange and equity theories of conflict, attribution theory examines two constructs: blame and perceived control. Researchers conducting field studies and laboratory experiments on conflict have found that when people perceive that they have some control over the resolution of the problem, they are able to cope more effectively with negative events (Langer & Rodin, 1976). It, therefore, seems plausible that if one party perceives some control over the conflicts and the solutions in the

post-divorce period, there will be increased satisfaction with the post-divorce parenting of the children.

In contrast to the motivation-oriented theories of conflict are the behavior/event theories of conflict. These theorists purport that it is important to understand the action that each party exhibits in conflict and seek new behaviors to manage the conflict (Patterson, 1975; Satir, 1964; Turner, 1970). Moreover, successful management of the conflict encompasses the clarification of rights and obligations, setting interpersonal boundaries, establishing and maintaining power hierarchies as evidenced in decision-making, and promoting open communication (Coser, 1956; Deutsch, 1973; Simmel, 1955; Sprey, 1971; Vuchinich, 1984, 1987).

Vuchinich (1987) indicated that verbal conflict is most often the style in which the conflict is managed. By definition, verbal conflict refers to one person verbally disagreeing with another by challenging, correcting, downgrading, threatening, accusing, insulting, or finding fault. If the other person responds with a counter-opposition, then a conflict is fully underway. These conflicts may be known as spats, disputes, quarrels, bickering, squabbles, run-ins, and so on. The topical content may vary from trivial to important issues. How frequently the conflicts occur and with what degree of intensity must be examined if researchers are to explain more adequately parental conflict (Schaeffer, 1989).

Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) submitted that, in fact, negotiation theory offers an explicit negotiation model to explain decision-making as a solution to conflict resolution. Strauss (1977) cautioned that decision-making processes are difficult to conceptualize and operationalize. Rubin and Brown (1975) stated that the aim of negotiation is to attain a convergence where there is dissensus of goals or behaviors. Bargaining behaviors, also referred to as strategies or tactics, include verbal persuasion tactics that may be cooperative or competitive (Scanzoni, 1978; Straus, 1979). The behaviors are then attached to outcomes. Finally, outcomes are the focus of this examination of conflict. If disharmony exists, then what is the function of the disharmony? Thus, the solution to the motivation for the conflict or the behavior of the conflict then becomes the problem. De Shazer and Berg (1988) asserted that it is therefore important to determine what would happen if the conflict did not exist. In the case of parental conflict, would the relationship between the former spouses cease to exist?

Social judgement theorists extend this notion in a definitional explanation of conflict as a solution that is reached between two parties that is unsatisfactory (Dhir & Markman, 1984). That is, conflict results from failure of problem-solving strategies to solve problems because of interdependency in the marital couple. It may be

hypothesized that the interdependency continues to be present post-divorce and that the solution of conflict keeps the couple in contact with each other. The results of research studies suggest that effective conflict resolution is related to couples' use of problem solving skills and communication (Markman, 1979). In addition, the results of one longitudinal study has indicated that negative communication in the marriage was predictive of later relationship unhappiness (Markman, 1979).

In an attempt to understand relationship conflict, Sager (1976) asserted that marital conflict was due to different marital contracts. These contracts are a way in which to describe the expectations in the relationship. Sager (1976) further observed that spouses are not always aware of the expectations they hold or the expectations of their spouse. A similar explanation suggests that each individual possesses a different cognitive set and that conflict results from miscommunication about the cognitive/perceptual realm. Dhir and Markman (1984), in an application of social judgement theory to couple conflict, described the couples' interdependency problems in every day living and attributed the dissonance to differing cognitive sets. These cognitive sets provide a representation of the environment based on prior experiences and, thus, predisposes the person to respond in predictable patterns. These patterns are embedded in the

individual's belief system. Therefore, human judgement is based on one's biased interpretation of information. For Dhir and Markman (1984) conflict occurs when each party receives the same cue information, but arrives at a different judgement. Thus, for divorced partners, the interpretation of the divorce and the needs of the children may be compatible or oppositional.

In a perspective congruent with the behavior/event focused theories, Guerin, Fay, Burden, and Kautto (1987) described a model of marital conflict based on a developmental and contextual perspective. In addition, there are four factors that influence the degree of intensity or duration of the conflict: (a) family system factors, (b) marital dyad factors, (c) triangle factors, and (d) individual factors. Family systems factors include the family history and the transitional stage of the family. Guerin et al. (1987) contended that it is during transitional phases in the family life cycle that conflict in relationships will most likely emerge. The more problematic the transitional issue is for the couple, the more intense the conflict.

The conflictual process in the marital relationship is examined by determining the emotional climate of the relationship, the way the couple maintains the relationship, and the degree of fusion in the marriage. Triangulation, or the inclusion of another person in the

relationship, can intensify marital conflict. In fact, the more fixed or polarized the relationships in a triangle, the more intense will be the marital conflict (Guerin et al., 1987). Finally, individual factors are considered in terms of the amount of self-focus of each spouse and the adaptive level of functioning of each.

In an attempt to explain the maintenance of conflict and the emotional climate of the marital relationship when conflict occurs, Guerin et al. (1987) described four stages of marital conflict. Stage I typically occurs in the early years of marriage. Communication is open and there is a minimal amount of polarization in the relationship. Reactivity and criticism are at low levels. In stage II the couple defines marital conflict as a problem. Anxiety and emotional arousal are exhibited in active marital conflict. Communication remains open, however, there are more criticism and struggle for control. Stage III is characterized by a dramatic emotional climate with high anxiety. Triangles in the relationship are intense and polarized. The level of criticism is high while both spouses have an impaired ability to communicate on a general or personal level. One or both of the individuals are bitter, and activity together resembles parallel play. Finally, stage IV is marked by extreme conflict. One or both spouses have engaged an attorney at this stage.

Guerin et al. (1987) defined conflict from a perspective of a continuum moving from minimal to dysfunctional. These authors view conflict as being potentially healthy or unhealthy depending on the way in which the conflict expresses disagreement and/or promotes resolution to marital discord.

Similar to the exchange and equity theories, Haley (1963) defined marriage as a process of defining relationships and was concerned with the power struggles that ensue between the couple. He further asserted that all couples establish implicit or explicit rules in their relationship regarding who sets the rule, who follows the rule, or who is in control. Conflict ensues when the rules are ambiguous or are challenged by one partner. Couples are required to work out conflicts over the rules that involve the establishment of metarules, or "rules about the rules." According to Haley (1963), these conflicts are influenced by each partner's experiences in the family of origin. In addition, like Guerin et al. (1987), Haley (1963) described this conflict as resulting from transition from one's family. Thus, for Haley (1963), marital conflict centers on disagreements on who is to set the rules for living together, disagreements about the specific rules, and attempts to enforce rules that conflict with each other. Fighting is often a means of resolving rule conflicts and reaching compromise.

Feldman (1982) proposed an integrative interpersonal-intrapsychic model of dysfunctional marital conflict. Marital conflicts are described as dysfunctional if they cause psychological and/or physical injury, decrease interpersonal trust, and fail to generate constructive changes in subsequent marital interaction. Further, destructive marital conflict is described as the combination of narcissistic rage, narcissistic anxiety, and cognitive distortion. The behaviors associated with conflict consists of verbal assaults such as criticism, sarcasm, insults, character assassinations, and/or acts of physical violence (Gelles, 1972). In addition, the degree of destructiveness is correlated with the degree of narcissistic vulnerability of the spouses (Stolorow & Harrison, 1975).

Reviewers of experimental studies of aggression have concluded that hostile aggression is motivated by a desire to inflict psychological or physical injury or pain. Further, the aggression is evoked by frustrations that constitute threats to self-esteem (Berkowitz, 1962; Feshbach, 1974; Green & Murray, 1973; Kaplan, 1972; Konecni, 1975).

Warner and Olson (1981) extended the intrapsychic approach proposed by Feldman (1982) and concurred that self-esteem and moral value systems are variables influencing human conflict. In a nontraditional

perspective, these authors suggested that the response of individuals in conflict is not causal but, instead, a means of morally justifying themselves in a purposeful way.

Conflict, then, as a construct in this study, must be interpreted from a synthesis of exchange or equity theoretical orientations, negotiation theory, social judgement theory and developmental perspectives in order to explicate the intricacies of couple relationships. This includes examining conflict in terms of the mode of anger expression, self-esteem, and conflict tactic style. In addition, conflict must be described as it is manifested in the legal process of divorce, particularly in the context of child custody.

Custody, Legal Implications, and the Court System

Child custody laws over the years have been influenced by societal needs and beliefs. Until the 1920s Anglo-American law had little difficulty in resolving parental disputes regarding custody (Watson, 1981). It was presumed that the child was chattel of the father (Levine, 1976). Then, as societal beliefs concerning the role of the mother in child-rearing changed, courts altered their view and determined that the child belonged with the mother. This presumption, commonly termed the "tender years doctrine" maintained that children of young and tender years, typically from birth to five years, belonged with the mother (Blau, 1984). Since the early 1970s this doctrine

has been rejected by many states including the state of Florida. The Florida courts profess to follow the concept that the "best interest of the child should be the touchstone of custody decisions" (Palmer & Landis, 1989). The Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act of 1971 provides for the custody of the child to be determined by the "best interest" standard. However, the best interest of the child has not been clearly defined.

In an attempt to define such standards, the Florida legislature, in 1982, adopted the Florida Shared Parental Responsibility Act (Fla. Stat. 61.13 (2) (b) 1). This Act supposedly provides equal consideration for both parents for the care and responsibilities of the raising of their children. The policy states, in part:

It is the public policy of the State of Florida to assure each minor child frequent and continuing contact with both parents after the parents have separated or dissolved their marriage. Shared parental responsibility requires that both parents retain full parental rights and responsibilities with respect to their child and requires both parents to confer so that major decisions affecting the welfare of the child will be determined jointly. (Fla. Stat. 61.13 (2) (b) 1)

There is a large body of research to support this shared parental notion of custody (Elkin, 1987; Gardner, 1982; Grief, 1979; Lowery, 1985); however, the tenets of shared parental or joint custody have not been clearly defined. This review will refer to the shared raising of the child as joint custody.

For every custody arrangement, courts must consider two types of custody: legal and physical. Legal custody is the right of a parent to make decisions that affect the child's welfare, such as those related to the child's home life, school, medical treatment, and other daily needs. Physical custody is the right of the parent to be with the child (Fla. Stat. 61.13 (2) (b) 2a).

In Florida, shared parental responsibility or joint custody encompasses both types of custody. A court must order shared parental responsibility unless it finds that such an arrangement would be detrimental to the child. Under shared custody, both parents have legal custody; one parent generally has primary physical custody, and the other parent has secondary physical custody on a visitation basis (Fla. Stat. 61.13 (2) (b) 2a). When parents can demonstrate their intent and ability to cooperate with regard to their children, shared parenting is a viable option (Palmer & Landis, 1989). However, the court retains the right to award one parent sole responsibility for specific aspects of legal custody if cooperation is not possible or prudent.

A review of various custody awards demonstrates that each arrangement must be tailored to the specific facts of the case and needs of the family (Palmer & Landis, 1989). However, if divorcing parents are able to agree to a particular arrangement, that arrangement may be approved by

the court providing that the court finds the arrangement in the best interest of the child. It is thought that when parents reach this compromise, they may be more apt to adhere to it and have a positive effect on the post-divorce adjustment of the family (Johnston & Campbell, 1988).

In addition, Luepnitz (1986), in a study of the impact of custody type on children's adjustment, found that children in joint custody retained positive relationships with both parents, as opposed to the avuncular relationships they developed with noncustodial parents in a single custody situation. Further, it was found that the joint custody families engaged in less relitigation than did the single custody families. Finally, Luepnitz (1986) observed that where parents remained embattled after divorce, children's self-concept lessened.

In fact, as the prevalence of joint custody increases as a presumption or option, there is a concern among social science researchers (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989) and the courts (Palmer, 1988) that many divorcing spouses are emotionally unprepared or unwilling to cooperate to provide joint decision making and shared parenting for the best interest of the child.

Clearly, there are problems inherent in joint custody. These problems appear to be connected to the amount of parental conflict that exists in the post-divorce period. Although the professional literature affirms the belief

that a child needs both parents, there is a growing prevalence of opinion among child custody researchers that the involvement of both parents is only positive when there is low parental conflict (Gardner, 1986; Hagan, 1987; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Issacs, Leon, & Kline, 1987; Kline & Johnston, 1988; Luepnitz, 1986; Watson, 1981). In fact, the state of California, in an effort to address parental conflict and tension post-divorce, has voted to modify a widespread preference of state courts for awarding custody to both parents. The statute asserts that the courts should make "neither a presumption or a preference" for joint custody but should instead make a decision for a parenting plan based on the best interest of the child (Cal. Stat. 4600 (d)).

Gardner (1986) recommended a change of custody in favor of a parent not receiving appropriate treatment by the other parent as a remedy for continued parental conflict or alienation of the child toward that parent. Hirst and Smiley (1984) conducted a study in Australia of 200 custodial parents and found that custody type was not as important a factor as the access pattern for parent-child contact. Access patterns were categorized into five basic patterns: (a) free access in which the child may initiate contact with either parent; (b) flexible access whereby an understanding exists between the parents but may be modified; (c) rigid, regular access as defined by a

legal agreement; (d) irregular access that occurs on an occasional basis; and (e) no access at all (Hirst & Smiley, 1984).

Access patterns may be influenced by the parents as one way of resolving their own emotional responses to the child or toward the other parent. Further, when free, flexible access exists, there is evidence that the parents have managed their emotional divorce and are capable of cooperation in the best interest of the child. In fact, as a result of the findings of the study, Hirst and Smiley (1984) suggested that for those parents who had trouble resolving the separation and post-divorce issues, access problems persist. They further asserted that when high conflict exists between the needs of the new family system and the needs of the old, the ideal of continuing access may have to be abandoned. This structure, according to Hirst and Smiley (1984), allows for the grieving for the absent parent to take place without placing long-term stress on the child's new family system. These researchers criticized some of the work of Hetherington et al. (1976) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) because it was based totally on middle class participants.

Concerned with the consequences of custody types, Issacs, Leon, and Kline (1987) investigated how 200 children from various custody arrangements perceived their divorced families. These authors argued that it is not the

custody type that shapes the child's perception of the family, rather the nature of the relationship; and, not only is the parent-child relationship important, but also the child's relationship with the parents collectively and the parents relationship with each other. Although it is important for the child to have a positive relationship with both parents, it is also important that the child see the parents getting along with each other. If there is conflict between the parents, the child may more likely become alienated from the nonresidential parent. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the child that the parents maintain a rapport with each other post-divorce (Issacs, Leon, & Kline, 1987).

A similar concern was echoed by Volgy and Everett (1985) when they evaluated data from two landmark studies completed in the 1970s by Wallerstein and Kelly and Hetherington, Cox, and Cox. These authors described the need for open access to both parents for the post-divorce adjustment of children. In addition, they described the effect of the attitude of the parents toward each other. In fact, Volgy and Everett (1985) argued that the greater the hostility between the parents, the greater the difficulty for the child's adjustment. A positive influence, for them, is the arrangement of joint custody so that neither parent is threatened by the loss of their children. Other researchers disagree and believe instead

that the degree of conflict may persist or become exacerbated by the joint custody type (Ahrons, 1987; Gardner, 1986; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

The concern in the literature of persistent parental conflict and the deleterious effects on the post-divorce family is being addressed by the legal profession and the courts as well. Palmer (1989) asserted that within the framework of shared parental responsibility exists a continued battle between many parents for the affection or loyalty of their children. This point is illustrated by the frequent modification and enforcement proceedings that occur despite a well detailed dissolution of marriage (Palmer & Landis, 1989). In *Gardner v. Gardner* (1986), the judge pointed out that there was an affirmative obligation on the part of the mother to facilitate a relationship between a child and his father. In this case, the judge also declared that the lack of encouragement or neutrality of the mother's attitude toward the relationship of the other parent and child was not in the best interest of the child and, therefore, a violation of shared parental responsibility. In a similar case, (*Schutz v. Schutz*, 1985), a judge found that:

The court has no doubt that the cause of the blind, brainwashed, bigoted, belligerence of the children toward the father grew from the soil nurtured, watered, and tilled by the mother. The Court is thoroughly convinced that the mother breached every duty she owed as the custodial

parent of instilling love, respect and feeling in the children for their father. Worse, she slowly dripped poison into the minds of these children, maybe beyond the power of this Court to find the antidote. But the Court will try. (Shutz v. Shutz, 874)

Gardner (1986) described a process, called parental alienation syndrome, that is the process by which one parent overtly or covertly speaks or acts in a derogatory manner to or about the other parent in an attempt to alienate the child from the other parent. Gardner (1986) further asserted that, in recent years, the syndrome has been a problem in more than 90% of the custody conflicts in which he has been the court appointed examiner. The problem of parental alienation syndrome has occurred more frequently according to this clinician due to the rejection of the presumption in favor of the mother for custody of the minor children. Gardner (1986) speculated that, with the inception of joint custody in at least 33 states and literature in favor of same sex custody and father custody, there is more fear for the mother that she will lose her children. Gardner (1986) originally recommended that when there was evidence that the parental alienation was occurring the children should immediately be transferred to the father. In recent times, however, he has reversed his belief and suggests instead that custody be awarded to the parent who has provided the greatest degree of childrearing input during the children's formative years. Because mothers today still are more often regarded as primary

caretakers, more mothers would be given parental preference (Goldenberg, 1987). A recent Florida case almost seems to revive the "tender years doctrine". The appeals court stated:

It is true that the doctrine can no longer be dispositive; . . . however, we do not believe the doctrine has been totally abolished. . . . Our version of common sense suggests that, under the facts of this particular case, the one-year-old female infant and her three-year-old sister preferably should reside with the mother. (DeCamp v. Hein, p. 234)

It is apparent that there is not uniformity of opinion on the best interest of the child. There are, however, several cases in the states of Louisiana, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Illinois, North Carolina, Iowa, and California where judges have held that a parent cannot engage in overt or covert conflict with the other parent (Palmer, 1988). There is also question about the importance of the primary residential parent's role in facilitating visitation with the other parent. In French v. French (1984) the Court found that a parent may not inhibit the visitation of the other parent because the parent finds the conduct of the other parent morally objectionable. The Court can, however, appoint a guardian ad litem to serve as a neutral advocate of the child. In fact, in 1986, the Florida Legislature included as a factor for determining primary residential parent, the consideration of which parent is more likely to allow the child frequent and continuing contact with the other parent

(Goldenberg, 1987). As indicated in the cases of Gardner v. Gardner and Schutz v. Schutz, overt conflict presented verbally to the children about the other parent will not be tolerated by the courts. In addition, more subtle conflict such as thwarted visitation efforts are being scrutinized (French v. French, 1984). In the recent case of Tessler v. Tessler (1989) the Court reversed custody and, in fact, awarded sole custody to the father because of the mother's erratic, aggressive, and antagonistic behavior regarding the child's visitation with the father. Further, the mother engaged in hostile disputes in the presence of the child and admitted to filing rape charges against her former spouse in an attempt to interfere with the child's relationship with the father.

Two additional case summaries extend the notion of covert or overt parental conflict in an effort to address the right of one parent to remove the child from the location where the child has enjoyed a relationship with both parents. In the case of Cole v. Cole (1988) a mother wanted to leave the state with her minor child for the purpose of remarriage and her new husband's job. The Court found that the facts were insufficient to warrant removing the child from a relationship with the father and stated that the new husband would need to find other work rather than relocate with the child. Similarly, in the case of

Jones v. Jones (1987), the Court found that to remove the child would not be in the best interest of the child.

While it appears that the Florida courts are protecting the relationship of the child with both parents and are attempting to thwart overt and covert hostility and conflict between parents, it is clear that these efforts are not sufficient. This may be, in part, due to the role of professionals who are retained to "help" conflicted families and the role of our social institutions in perpetuating the problem. To address the needs of a divorcing parents, it has been suggested that a "marriage" between the attorney and therapist must exist (Steinberg, 1980). According to Steinberg (1980), a legal resolution that ignores the family's emotional needs is as inappropriate as a counselor who conflicts with the legal needs of the family.

Volgy and Everett (1980) cautioned that the dispute is enhanced by the drama of adversarial attorneys and judges who assist in perpetuating earlier marital disappointments, anger, or guilt. Often, attorneys may be strongly influenced by the parent's erratic or hostile behavior during the divorce and will assume that the parent is not capable of effective child rearing. Parents and their attorneys fight to obtain a "win" situation for their marital possessions and their children. It may not matter so much in the long run who gets the stocks or who gets the

marital residence if the ramifications are that the children are destroyed in the process. Concomitantly, parents who continue the conflict in the court may not negotiate a successful post-divorce adjustment.

Likewise, the child may suffer emotionally if the parents spend a year in therapy deciding with whom the child will reside. In addition, therapists often will see only one of the spouses in a divorce situation. While the spouse in therapy may feel supported and gain a new view of self, the other spouse may feel increasingly isolated. Whitaker and Miller (1969) cautioned that individual therapy, during or in the initial stage of predivorce decision-making, is more likely to polarize the marital dyad and increase the possibility of an adversarial dissolution.

Glickstein (1989) advocated that judges should become informed on family issues by reading current literature, diffuse lawyer's emotional participation in their client's battles, and combine the use of mediation, parent education, and therapy to enhance the effectiveness of shared parental responsibility and parental cooperation. Steinberg (1980) cautioned that, if not, lawyers will be caught in the middle believing they are performing legal tasks when, in reality, they are pawns in a struggle whose roots they are not trained or hired to understand.

Our educational institutions contribute to parental conflict in that they do not always understand the importance of the involvement of both parents in the academic life of the child. It is not uncommon to hear that the counselor invited only one parent to a staffing, conferred with only one parent regarding the child's school performance or behavioral problem, or permitted a child to have only two tickets to a class performance when there are four parents. The plight of the parentally-conflicted divorce continues to expand and complicate the criteria of the best interest of the child. Currently, questions have been raised in our courts regarding the custody of the embryos resulting from in-vitro fertilization. In addition, grandparent access to the child, paternity issues, and stepparent rights exacerbate the complexity of child custody and provide fuel for parents who seek additional means to carry out their drama in the courtroom. Finally, as the post-divorce period evidences intrapsychic and interparental conflicts regarding child-related issues, parents are faced with complex decisions influenced by changing legislation and by professionals who may not understand nor act in the best interest of the family.

Interparental Conflict and Post-divorce Adjustment

Divorcing parents are required to make decisions about the economic and parenting aspects of divorce at a time when they are experiencing enormous changes in their lives

and are going through the emotional process of divorce adjustment (Girdner, 1985). This adjustment is characterized in the earlier stages by denial, hurt, loneliness, anger, and depression. For many couples, the division of assets and parental responsibility stimulates unresolved issues of an earlier stage (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). For other couples, it may be that they will not move beyond the stage of anger, or that the anger will be refueled during transition periods or critical events in the lives of the binuclear family. Thus, many parents may not be successfully adjusting to their divorce years later, and consequently, neither are their children (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Although the process of dissolution of marriage has been examined, there has been little attention paid to the ongoing relationship that exists between former spouses. Yet, the relationship creates a shared history of experiences that does not necessarily terminate with the dissolution (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). The lack of language to describe the former spousal relationship (e.g., "ex" or "former") illustrates this dilemma. Ahrons (1981) attempted to describe the ongoing relationships of the formerly married. These interactional styles range from very friendly to very hostile; however, she noted that over half of the divorced spouses have dissolved relationships

with continued conflict and anger. In addition, Ellison (1983) indicated that, in a study of 20 divorced families, parental harmony was rated and defined as a critical factor by the parents and their children. Many parents indicated that they viewed maintaining a positive relationship with their former spouses as oppositional to their individual goal of increasing their ability to function independently as a single person. Other parents stated that they were more interested in working on their own problems than on those of their children. These notions support the concept that divorce adjustment and the degree of parental harmony or conflict are potentially conflictual concepts. In other words, to coparent with a former spouse may be viewed by some as contradictory for personal growth.

For increased understanding among professionals regarding the types of former spousal relationships Ahrons (1981) has described five distinct patterns: (a) perfect pals, (b) cooperative colleagues, (c) angry associates, (d) fiery foes, and (e) dissolved duos. Perfect pals are not common in our society. The parents are friends and are willing to compromise on parenting while not willing to do that in the marriage. On the other hand, cooperative colleagues are not friends but are capable of cooperating as parents. Angry associates continue to hold bitter and resentful feelings regarding the marriage and have long, heated battles. They may be able to cooperate on parenting

issues to some extent. Fiery foes cannot coparent. These parents are enemies and are frequently litigious after the divorce. Dissolved duos do not interact at all. Typically, one spouse withdraws from the family and maintains no contact. Kressel (1985) estimated that destructive conflict occurs in at least 50% of divorced families. Likewise, Ahrons (1981) concluded that about 50% of the divorced parents in her study fell into the categories of angry associates or fiery foes. For Ahrons and Rodgers (1987), what seems to differentiate constructive divorces from destructive divorces is the ability of the divorced spouses to accept their past errors and move forward in their relationship with each other in the best interest of the children. Some will resolve and grow to structure new individual lives and relationships. Others will grow toward further entrenchment in patterns of hostility. And, for others, indifference may emerge.

Gardner (1987) described the continued conflict and hostility post-divorce as parental alienation syndrome. The syndrome is a disturbance in children promulgated by their parents. This disturbance is manifested by a polarized view by the child of the parents as the "good" parent or the "bad" parent. Implied in this concept is the systematic conscious and unconscious programming of the child to denigrate the other parent. In addition, the "hatred" typically extends to the "hated parent's" extended

family as well. A basic tenet of this concept is that the "hated" parent is actually loved and the "loved" parent is, in fact, the target of much internal hostility in the child. Gardner (1987) claimed that, while this behavior is attributed to 90% of the mothers engaged in custody litigation and 10% to fathers engaged in the same, this phenomena is a result of a majority of mother-custody families and the inception of coparenting concepts in many states. Further, without the presumption of mother-custody, many mothers have become fearful of losing the child and perhaps the mother-role as well. Gardner (1987) recognized that the ability to resolve adult issues in the divorce process is impaired for some parents and, in fact, the product of negative parental behaviors detoured through the child. Overt and covert behaviors by the parents many times create conflict within the child that may take years to resolve.

He classifies these negative parental behaviors as (a) brainwashing; (b) subtle, unconscious parental programming; and (c) situational factors. The brainwashing factor may be present to varying degrees. This factor is characterized by the use by one parent of terms such as adulterer, philanderer, or abandoner to describe the other parent and may refer to the other parent's girlfriend as a whore, slut, or homebreaker. The parent may also complain to the child that the other parent does not pay child

support adequately and expresses fear that the family may starve to death. The parent may also use sarcasm when talking about the other parent such as "isn't it wonderful that your father is taking you this weekend?" Some parents use nonverbal expression such as rolling of the eyes when referring to the other parent or instruct the child not to tell the other parent where they will be when they go out of town intimating that the other parent is not to be trusted. Not all the behaviors are as overt for parental alienation syndrome. Although many of the parental behaviors are overt and easily recognizable, there are a number of more subtle parental behaviors as well. These behaviors take the form of a parent who tells the child that it is ordered that visitation with the other parent be followed and states that the child will be backed by the parent if the child wishes to go to court or talk to the judge. Other covert behaviors include neutrality expressed by one parent toward visitation by the child with the other parent or the parent who threatens to move so there will not be access for visitation. Some parents refuse to let the other parent park in the driveway or ring the doorbell, implying that the other parent is undesirable. Finally, Gardner (1987) described situational factors that include the scenario where the child develops resentment toward the other parent to solidify the relationship with the residential parent or a situation whereby one child

observes a sibling who is rejected by one parent for maintaining a relationship with the other parent.

Like Gardner (1987), Girdner (1985) described the three most common ways in which parents involve their children in their conflict, particularly in the event of an ensuing court battle as pumping, coaching, and poisoning. Pumping refers to the parent's attempt to extract information about the other parent from the child. Sometimes the child is specifically instructed to spy on the other parent. Coaching refers to the prompting of the child by the parent on information to tell the judge or counselor. Poisoning is characterized by one parent talking negatively about the other to the child. Thus, the child becomes caught between pleasing one parent and being disloyal to the other. Consequently, guilt and conflict are fostered in the child by the parents.

Kaslow and Schwartz (1987) described a conflicted divorce as one in which the parent or parents experience a period of prolonged reactive depression, unabated fury, desire for revenge, and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. These individuals are most apt to try to influence their child against the former spouse. Further, they treat the divorce as the most critical event in their lives and become stuck in that notion. Parental behaviors detrimental to the best interest of the child may be fostered by (a) anger at the former spouse resulting in

refusal of visitation, (b) inability to recognize the worth of the other parent and sabotage of visits if the child eats junk food or is not clean, (c) efforts to make the child feel guilty for loving the other parent, (d) fears that the child will love the other parent more, (e) lack of understanding that children need to know that they are loved by both parents, (f) inability to be flexible in working out a schedule, and (g) domineering and demanding behaviors regarding the other parent's time with the child (Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987).

Parental conflict during the post-divorce period such as the behaviors delineated above impedes the accomplishment of a psychic divorce. In addition, conflicting and alternating feelings of yearning for the ex-spouse and anger for that person may foster approach-avoidance behavior by phone or at the old haunts that provide memories of better times in the marriage (Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987).

Johnston and Campbell (1988) and Ahrons (1987) indicated the ability of each partner to resolve conflict during the marriage is also a key factor to determine post-divorce conflict. Likewise, Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) reported that for some divorced parents, rather than fight in person, they now fight over the telephone, when picking up or dropping off the children, or through the children. These behaviors, in addition to many more subtle

behaviors characterized by Gardner (1987), may challenge the notion that divorce is a solution to interparental conflict.

Johnston and Campbell (1988), in their study of high-conflict families in the aftermath of divorce, concurred with Ahrons and Rodgers (1987), Gardner (1987), Hetherington and Clingempeel (1988), and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) who indicated that one-third of divorced parents remain hostile and embittered many years subsequent to divorce. These authors developed the concept of the divorce impasse in which they have found that parents utilize conflict to manage loss, anger, rejection, and helplessness. This conflict may be fueled by extended family, new partners, attorneys and mental health professionals, and, at times, may be directed through the child to the other parent or toward the child by developing an intense emotional dependence on the child. One parent develops the concept of the "good" parent and "bad" parent in an attempt to defend a fragile self-identity. The parent does not recognize the ambivalence of good and bad within the personality structure of self and, thus, externalizes the "bad" by placing those behaviors on the ex-spouse. This polarized view of mother-father protects their sense of self and creates a need to "win" in court to maintain "good parent" status. Further, some parents attempt to cease the child's contact with the other parent

in an attempt to ward off the possibility that the child may prefer the other (Johnston & Campbell, 1988).

When the battle for the protection of self ensues an angry blaming stance by one parent may be met with retaliatory strategies by the other parent which perpetuates a circular motion with no clear designation of cause and effect. This systematic organization of the conflicting interactions of the parents (Minuchin, 1974) creates a pattern so firmly entrenched that an intervention point may be difficult to ascertain. In systems theory language, the deflecting of the parental conflict through the child is described as triangulation. Such indirect conflict and projection of negative feelings through the child prohibits reality testing or real-life experiences of one another which perpetuates the struggle. What is most significant is that as parents are caught in a battle to vindicate self and denigrate the other, the child becomes the indirect target of the intense feeling whether those feelings stem from loss, fear, anger, rejection, fragile self-identity, or depression.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) characterized the battle from the eyes of the child as one in which there are two teams. The more powerful team will win the home turf. Further, the child will root for different teams at different times. If the child does not take sides, there may be feelings of isolation and disloyalty to both

parents. There appears to be no solution. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) addressed the kind of persistent anger in post-divorce parental conflict with an analogy from Greek mythology:

Widely known for her witchcraft, Medea betrays her father and homeland for Jason, who is searching for the Golden Fleece. Medea helps Jason in his quest and then travels to his country where they are married and she bears his two children. With time, however, Jason rejects his wife for a younger woman. Medea is enraged as she feels exploited and betrayed by the man for whom she betrayed her own father and country. Her anger has no bounds; she feels that there is no course of action that can save her pride and no course that can rescue her from humiliation. Carried away by a psychotic rage, Medea murders her children. (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 198).

According to these researchers, Medea has few choices. Jason is too powerful for her to kill. She cannot kill herself, for she would remove Jason's dilemma. The only way she can now hurt Jason is through the children. Therefore, she murders them. The myth, according to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), captures the powerful feeling that many people have at the time of divorce, specifically, the kind of anger that does not change over time and that is based on a sense of being profoundly hurt, rejected, abandoned, betrayed, and outraged to the core of one's being. Because one-third of the children in divorce families are parties to intense parental conflict, it is apparent that the Medea Syndrome may be played out in families every day. In fact, 10 years later, the parents

in their original study were still angry at their former spouses. For one-half of the women and one-third of the men, anger had become an ongoing presence in their lives. Interestingly, men undergo less psychological change than women (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Male social roles are defined more by employment so that there is a constant factor post-divorce that may not be present for women who are not vested in career roles.

The Medea Syndrome, much like Gardner's (1987) Parental Alienation Syndrome and the concept of the Divorce Impasse (Johnston & Campbell, 1988), illustrates the ongoing interparental conflict that occurs in many divorced families. The conflict appears to have no boundaries and is not set in any one phase of the divorce life cycle. Further, the two psychological tasks during divorce, which include the rebuilding of the life of the adult and the protection of the children from the crossfire of parental conflict, may themselves be in conflict. Thus, child custody experts (Ahrons, 1981; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989) reported the existence of interparental conflict and the resultant parental alienation syndrome described by Gardner (1987) but do not offer sufficient evidence of the specific behaviors in a quantifiable manner. No one study has adequately assessed the behaviors or provided

conclusive data regarding the origin and the forms of the interparental conflict. In addition, gender differences need to be explored more fully within the context of the intensity and persistence of ongoing anger directed toward the former spouse. Finally, it is interesting that the research describes the conflict from a mother-oriented focus. Further research is needed to determine the role that fathers play in the ongoing interparental conflict.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

There is a need for research on long-term, post-divorce interparental conflict and the effects of this conflict on the individual adjustment of the parents. This qualitative and quantitative descriptive study was designed to describe the extent of post-divorce interparental conflict more than three years after divorce and to explore the behaviors associated with such conflict. The study also sought to identify gender differences in the behaviors associated with interparental conflict. Finally, the study explored the relationships among the variables of anger expression, degree of self-esteem, overall post-divorce adjustment and conflict tactic style.

This chapter presents the methodology used in the collection and analysis of the data. Included are a description of the population and sample, the sampling procedures, instrumentation, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures.

Population

The population of interest was parents who had been legally divorced for a minimum of three years and who are the biological parents of at least one child. The sample

was drawn from parents who reside in Central Florida. Central Florida is defined as the geographical area encompassing Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. Within these three counties are included urban, suburban, and rural settings. While some of the inhabitants of Central Florida are recently arrived service providers for the tourist industry, a large portion are long-term residents of the area. The marriage and divorce rates are representative of the national averages (Glick, 1984). In 1987, Orange County recorded 8,521 marriages and 4,113 dissolutions of marriage. Similarly, Seminole County performed 2,254 marriages and granted 1,367 divorces. Osceola County, with a large rural population, recorded 1,253 marriages and 714 divorces (Florida Statistical Abstracts, 1988). These figures are commensurate with current estimates of one in two marriages ending in divorce.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A total sample of 50 men and 50 women participated in this study. To be included in the study the men and women had been divorced for a minimum of three years, not currently married, and were the biological parents of at least one child. Participation was voluntary. Parents Without Partners in the Central Florida area was requested to provide potential participants for the study. The researcher attended a meeting of Parents Without Partners

to solicit volunteers. All volunteers were screened during the initial contact, and a list of potential participants was obtained. Parents Without Partners was selected because the membership is comprised of single, divorced adults with children. A sufficient sample was not obtained from Parents Without Partners for both phases of the study, however, so it was necessary to contact singles divorce support groups, and church-related singles divorce support groups. Those contacted were Singles Outdoors and Active, Catholic Divorce Recovery Group, and a non-denominational divorce support group supported by the Presbyterian Church.

The names of all qualified volunteers formed a subject pool from which participants for each of the phases of the study were selected. Each name was assigned a number. A table of random numbers was used to select participants. Phase I included 20 randomly selected participants. One individual declined the interview, so another name was drawn until 10 men and 10 women were obtained for inclusion in this phase. In Phase II, all remaining eligible participants received the survey.

Instrumentation/Variables

The variables measured in this study were those described by Gardner (1987), Johnston and Campbell (1988), and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) as factors associated with interparental conflict. These included anger expression, level of self-esteem, overall post-divorce

adjustment, and conflict tactic style. The non-copyrighted instruments used to measure these variables are located in the appendices. Copyrighted material was obtained from the authors cited.

Demographic information was also obtained on a demographic information sheet (Appendix A). Demographic information of interest included current age, gender, length of time legally divorced, length of time previously married, number of children, custody type, occupation, income level and type of treatment sought, if any, during the divorce process.

Anger

Anger was assessed by the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) (Spielberger, 1988). Anger was defined by Spielberger (1988) as a continuum of feelings expressed from mild irritation to hostile verbal or physical abuse directed toward the former spouse. He viewed anger as having three major components. The first component describes the frequency with which angry feelings are suppressed which he called "anger-in." The second component describes "anger-out" or how often the individual expresses anger toward others or the environment. Finally, the third component examines individual differences in the attempt to control anger expression.

The STAXI is a 44-item paper and pencil instrument designed to measure an individual's expression of anger and

experience of anger on six scales and two subscales. The inventory was initially developed by Spielberger and his colleagues in 1978. Further work on the assessment of anger expression was initiated in 1981 (Spielberger, 1988). There are three parts of the STAXI, each formulated from a different perspective. The individual is asked to report on "how I feel right now," "how I generally feel," and "when angry or furious." Respondents are asked to rate themselves on four-point scales that assess the intensity or the frequency of the experienced, expressed, suppressed, or controlled anger. Representative statements include "I feel irritated," "When I get mad I say nasty things," and "I tend to harbor grudges that I don't tell anyone about." Responses to each item are totaled for each subscale and are then assigned a scale raw score.

There is no time limit for administration of the STAXI; however, most adolescents and adults can complete it in 10 to 12 minutes. There are two forms available for the STAXI. One is a hand-scored form (HS) consisting of an item booklet and a rating sheet. The second form is a machine-scored form (G) for large scale projects. Form HS was used for this study.

Normative data for the STAXI were derived from more than 9,000 respondents from adult, adolescent, and college student populations. The mean age for the adults was 40 years, the median age for adolescents was 14 years, and the

college students had a median age of 19.95 years. There is not sufficient normative data on adult women, however, to obtain T scores and percentile scores.

Scores for the STAXI include a raw score, a percentile score, and a t score. The percentile rank corresponding with the scale score indicates how the individual compares with other individuals of similar age and gender. Scores between the 25th and 75th percentile may be considered within normal range. Those respondents with scores above the 75th percentile may experience or express anger to the degree that it interferes with appropriate functioning.

Alpha coefficients and item remainder correlations for the T-anger items were computed separately for males and females (Spielberger, 1988). The alpha coefficients for both sexes were .87, indicating a high degree of internal consistency. In addition, for the S-anger items, the alpha coefficients were .93 evidencing strong internal consistency for this scale. Further research is currently being conducted in behavioral medicine and health psychology so that more information may be obtained on test-retest reliability of the scales (Spielberger, 1981).

In order to evaluate the convergent validity of the T-Anger scale, correlations were calculated with the scales on the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory (BDHI) (1957) and the Overt Hostility (Hv) (Schultz, 1954) scales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Significant

correlations were found indicating strong concurrent validity for the T-Anger scale. Correlations between the T-Anger and the S-Anger scales with the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) and the T-Anxiety, T-Curiosity, S-Anxiety, and the S-Curiosity scales of the State-Trait Personality Inventory (STPI) (Spielberger et al., 1979) were moderate, which is consistent with the clinical findings that those who possess a high degree of trait anxiety will experience anger they cannot easily express.

Moderately high correlations were found for the anger-in and anger-out scores and T-anger, indicating that those persons who experience anger more frequently are more likely to express their anger. In addition, correlations of the anger expression scales with the T-Curiosity scale provide divergent validity for all three measures.

For the purposes of this study, the anger expression scale was used. This scale includes anger-in, anger-out, and anger control. Inclusion of this scale is based on the premise that individuals who experience anger more frequently are more likely to express, rather than repress, anger. Moreover, persons with high anger expression scores experience intense angry feelings which may be suppressed, expressed in aggressive behavior, or both. These individuals indicate extreme difficulty in interpersonal

relationships. Raw scores were used for data analysis of the anger expression scales in this study.

Self-esteem

Self-concept and self-esteem were measured by the Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) for children and adults (Battle, 1981). Self-esteem has been indicated as a variable noteworthy of assessment as an indicator of post-divorce adjustment (Fisher, 1976). The SEI was developed to measure an individual's perception of self. The instrument contains 40 items distributed into the following four subscales: (a) general self-esteem items, (b) social self-esteem items, (c) personal self-esteem items, and (d) "lie" items which indicate defensiveness. The instrument without the "lie" scale consists of 32 items intended to measure an individual's general, personal, and social self-perception. The items are divided into two groups: those which indicate high self-esteem, and those which indicate low self-esteem. The individual checks each item either "yes" or "no." Examples of items on the SEI include: "Are you a failure," "Are your feelings easily hurt," and "Are you lacking in self-confidence." The inventory, which can be administered to groups or individuals, usually requires 15 to 20 minutes for administration. Most adults can self-administer the SEI; however, the instrument should be interpreted by someone knowledgeable in measurement,

psychology of adjustment, self-theory, and perceptual psychology (Battle, 1981).

Scores for the SEI are derived by totaling the number of items checked which indicate high self-esteem, excluding the "lie" scale items. A separate score may be computed by totaling the number of items checked correctly in the "lie" scale. Thus, the total possible score for Form AD (adult) is 32, and the highest "lie" score is 8. The instrument may be hand scored or machine scored. In addition, percentile ranks and t-score values may be obtained for Form AD.

Test-retest reliability was determined from the data collected on 127 psychology students. Information on time intervals for the test-retest reliability is not available in the current manual (Battle, 1981). Correlations for all students were .81; for males, .79; and for females, .82. In addition, internal consistency has been examined and revealed the following results for each self-esteem subscale: general, .78, social, .57, personal, .72, and the lie scale, .54.

Content validity was built into the Culture-Free SEI by developing a construct definition of self-esteem and by writing items intended to cover all areas of the construct (Battle, 1981). Concurrent validity was obtained by correlating the SEI with other measures of personality for adults, including Beck's Depression Inventory (Battle,

1977b; 1980a) and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Battle, 1980a). Further standardization of the lie scale was conducted with 434 men and women. Scores for combined sexes, males, and females, ranged from 1 to 8, with 92% earning a score of 4 or better, indicating that a large majority of the respondents displayed a lack of defensiveness when responding to the lie items (Battle, 1981). For the data analysis in this study, the raw score was used.

Post-divorce Adjustment

Post-divorce adjustment describes the process through which formerly married people progress both socially and emotionally as they address issues of self-worth, emotional disentanglement from the former love-partner, grief, loneliness, anger, social intimacy, and acceptance of the new life circumstances. For this study, the Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale (FDAS) (Fisher, 1976) was used to measure post-divorce adjustment.

The FDAS is a 100-item paper and pencil inventory designed to measure each individual's adjustment to the termination of their marriage. A total score and six subtest scores are calculated including scores on self-worth, anger, disentanglement, grief, trust and intimacy, and social self-worth. Responses are made to a series of statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from almost always to almost never. Statements such as "I am

constantly thinking of my former love-partner," "because my love-relationship failed, I must be a failure," and "I feel very frightened inside," are characteristic of items on the scale. Fisher (1976) cautioned that this scale is not designed to measure emotional illness. The FDAS is easily administered as a self-report instrument and may be scored by computer or through a set of six scoring masks. This study utilized the six scoring masks designed for researchers.

Since the inception of the use of the FDAS, the scale has been normed and standardized with an initial sample population of 500 which varied by gender, age, level of adjustment, education, and length of separation and included persons living together, people with children, persons whose parents were divorced, and remarried people. Norms are provided for all of these groups.

The alpha internal reliability for the total score is .985. The reliability of the subtests ranges from .87 to .95 (Fisher, 1976). Fisher does not provide any statistics for validity. The FDAS, however, has been correlated with the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Fisher, 1976). The correlation between the sets of scores on the TSCS and the FDAS was computed and found to be .46. Raw score data were utilized for the purpose of this study.

Conflict Tactic Style

Conflict tactic style was measured by the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979). Conflict tactic style has been identified as a factor to be explored in the post-divorce parental communication (Johnston & Campbell, 1988). The Conflict Tactics Scale was designed to measure the use of reasoning, verbal aggression, and violence as modes of dealing with conflict. The CTS is grounded in sociological conflict theory and was designed to explore conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest are defined as the fact that members of a social group each seek to live their lives in accordance with a personal agenda which will differ with the agenda of another member of the group.

The respondent was asked to rate on the CTS the frequency of actions that she or he might initiate if engaged in a conflict with a family member. The CTS Couple Form is composed of 19 alternative responses to conflict which are rated on a 6-point Likert scale according to the frequency of occurrence. There are three scales within the CTS based on three types of the expression of conflict: the Reasoning scale (rational discussion to resolve disputes), the Verbal Aggression scale (the use of verbal and nonverbal acts to demonstrate conflict), and the Violence scale (the use of physical force in conflict). Respondents were instructed to describe how often in the past year various behaviors have occurred. Examples of

statements of behaviors to be self-rated include: "discussed an issue calmly," "insulted or swore at him/her/you," "cried," "threw or smashed or kicked or hit something," or "beat him/her/you up." For the purposes of this research, the unit studied was parents who had been divorced a minimum of three years. The scale was adapted for paper and pencil administration. Hand scoring or computer scoring may be utilized; however, this study utilized hand scoring procedures. Attempts have been made to reduce socially desirable responding; however, this phenomenon may occur (Straus, 1981).

For Form N, which is the form to measure couple interactions, alpha reliability coefficients have been computed by Straus (1981). Alphas were high (.77 to .88) for the Verbal Aggression and Violence component (.62 to .88). Alphas were moderate for the Reasoning component (.50 to .76). There is no information on test-retest reliability in the current manual (Straus, 1981).

Measures of validity have been obtained and are available in the manual. Concurrent validity was examined by comparing parent reports of CTS scores with child reports of the same scores. Correlations for the Verbal Aggression and Violence scales were high (.43 to .51 and .33 to .64). However, the Reasoning scale produced a low (.12 to .19) correlation.

Straus (1979) cited evidence of construct validity with consistency demonstrated between scores on the CTS and behaviors predicted by other aggression control theories. In fact, there is a large body of evidence concerning the "catharsis" theory of aggression control (Straus, 1974a). A large number of correlations between CTS scores and other theoretical variables such as extreme husband or wife dominance have been cited. Further, numerous correlations exist between CTS scores and other variables in five independent studies (Bulcroft & Straus, 1975; Jorgensen, 1977; Mulligan, 1977; Steinmetz, 1977b; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Examples include the repeated findings of a inverse relationship between socioeconomic status and violence (Straus, 1974a; Straus et al., 1980). Additionally, there were findings that the lower a husband's economic and prestige resources relative to his wife, the greater his tendency to use physical violence to maintain a male dominant power position (Allen & Straus, 1980).

Post-divorce Parental Conflict

Information on post-divorce parental conflict behaviors and the associated emotions embedded in the expression of the conflict was obtained in two ways, through structured interviews and from responses to a parental post-divorce behavioral checklist developed by the researcher. Phase I of this study provided qualitative

data from structured interviews on the expression of parental conflict. The interview was structured to identify prevalent themes of conflict in the post-divorce period as well as identify the methods of conflict utilized by the couple during the marriage. The entire format is located in Appendix B. The researcher asked each participant to respond to a total of 30 questions comprised of ratings and open-ended questions. In addition, participants responded to a feelings checklist and indicated their current feelings about their divorce, as well as the feelings they recall from the time of the divorce.

The information was then organized by the researcher into a checklist of behaviors with which respondents indicated the frequency of occurrence of each variety of parental conflict behavior ranging from harmonious coparental behaviors to violent coparental behaviors in the post-divorce period. In addition, respondents indicated which emotions were most characteristic of the way they felt at the time of the legal divorce and the way they are currently feeling about their former spouse and the divorce. Once the Parental Post-Divorce Behavioral Checklist was developed it was reviewed by two Marriage and Family Therapists to determine face validity for the instrument.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was comprised of two phases. The first phase consisted of structured interviews with 10 men and 10 women. The second phase was a survey of 80 men and women who completed a set of paper and pencil inventories.

Phase I

For Phase I, a total of 20 participants (10 men and 10 women) were randomly selected from a subject pool of 40 divorced individuals at a meeting of Parents Without Partners. During the contact, the researcher screened each individual using the criteria for inclusion in this study. An appointment was made to conduct the interview in the participant's home or the researcher's office. At the start of each interview each individual filled out the demographic information sheet (Appendix A). Then each participant was interviewed using the structured interview format (Appendix B). Each interview was 90 minutes in length. This phase of the study was exploratory in nature with the aim of identifying prevalent patterns of behaviors of post-divorce interparental conflict. During the interview, participants were asked to describe their style of conflict and their perceptions of the conflict behavior of their former partner. This method of data collection was adapted from the qualitative methods utilized in Grounded Theory (Hutchinson, 1988). This methodology is a form of social criticism in that judgments are made about

identified patterns of social interaction. The mere documentation of the patterns provides such a judgment. This researcher attempted to describe the social structure and the emerging patterns of the participants. Sessions were taped for future coding. Basic social psychological processes (BSPs) were identified as core variables that are repeated over time (Hutchinson, 1988). Further descriptions of the coding procedures have been delineated in the section on data analysis.

Phase II

Phase II required a minimum of 80 participants. One hundred and two participants were asked to complete the parental conflict questionnaire and the instruments measuring anger, self-esteem, overall post-divorce adjustment, and conflict tactic style. Participants were solicited at meetings by the researcher and asked to respond to the questionnaires. Each participant was given a packet containing a cover letter with a brief description of the purpose of the study. Instructions for the delivery of the completed inventories (Appendix D) was included in case the participant did not complete the information during the meeting. In addition, each packet contained explicit directions for the completion of each inventory, the paper and pencil inventories, answer sheets, and the telephone number of the researcher should additional explanations have been required. An addressed return

envelope was also provided for all participants. An assistant of the researcher was available at the meeting to collect completed packets. To preserve confidentiality, participants' names were not placed on the packets.

It was not possible to obtain sufficient data from members of Parents Without Partners because of the limited membership of individuals who had been divorced a minimum of three years. Therefore, other organizations were contacted by this researcher to obtain participants for this study. A member of Outdoors and Active, a singles group which focuses on activities and socialization, distributed the packets to other members of the organization. The completed packets were returned by mail to this researcher. The same procedure was followed to generate participants from a Protestant Church divorce support group and a Catholic Church support group. Data collection covered a seven-month period due to the difficulty in obtaining suitable participants who met the requirements for inclusion in this study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine parental conflict three years following legal divorce. The research questions in this study were:

1. What is the extent of the expression of interparental conflict in the post-divorce period three years or more following a legal divorce?

- a. What is the frequency of the expression of the conflict?
- b. What are the range of behaviors exhibited during the conflict?
2. Is there an association between gender and conflict tactic strategies?
 - a. Is there an association between gender and reasoning conflict tactic strategies?
 - b. Is there an association between gender and verbal conflict tactic strategies?
 - c. Is there an association between gender and violent conflict tactic strategies?
3. Can parental conflict tactic styles be predicted from knowledge of levels of anger expression, self-esteem, and overall post-divorce adjustment?

Data Analysis

Phase I required qualitative research techniques for analysis of the in-depth interviews. A structured sequence of questions was posed by the researcher for the purpose of identifying clusters of behavioral patterns signifying a continuum of conflict styles. Research question one was analyzed by descriptive information obtained in this phase of the study as well as information obtained from the responses to the Parental Post-Divorce Behavioral Check List and the Couple Conflict Questionnaire. Descriptive

statistics such as frequency distribution, central tendencies, and gender responses were computed.

Phase II employed quantitative data analysis. Descriptive statistics of central tendency and dispersion were computed for all variables and demographic factors. Research question 2 was answered by computation of nonparametric measures of association. Three chi squares were run to determine associations between levels of conflict tactic styles and gender. Research question three was answered by multiple regression analyses.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

This study was designed to describe and examine interparental conflict and post-divorce adjustment of parents after a minimum of three years following divorce. This chapter includes a description of the final sample for Phase I and Phase II of the study, a discussion of each research question, and, finally, a summary of the results.

Phase I

The aim of Phase I was to conduct in-depth interviews with 20 men and women to identify conflict behaviors and to develop a parental post-divorce behavioral checklist. The checklist was included in the packet of information for participants in Phase II.

Demographic Information

The 20 participants in Phase I ranged in age from 21 to 52 years with a mean age of 39.4 years. The level of education of the interviewees ranged from one who did not complete high school to three with graduate school experience. Eight were college graduates. Occupations of the parents were varied and included homemakers, professionals, and skilled laborers. In respect to the marriage, the age at the time of the marriage of the

parents who participated in Phase I ranged from 17 to 31 years with a mean age of 23.65 years. The range of ages of the parents at the time of the divorce were from 27 to 46 with a mean age at divorce of 35.65 years. The length of time since the divorce ranged from three years to six years, with a mean length of time of 3.8 years. Nine of the spouses of the interviewees had remarried, while 11 remained unmarried. The number of children of the parents ranged from one to four, with the modal group of nine reporting two children.

Information about Divorce

Of the 20 parents interviewed, 19 reported that the mother retained primary legal custody of the children. Eight parents indicated that they resolved issues with their former spouse by their own agreement, while nine indicated that they relied on litigation to resolve issues regarding the children. Two utilized mediation as a method of resolution, while one parent reported that the divorce issues were still unsettled. Interestingly, 14 of the 20 parents did not seek therapy prior to the divorce, although afterwards 12 of the 20 initiated some type of therapy.

Adaptation to Divorce

Thirteen of the parents described their adjustment to divorce as difficult. They reported that they sought support from family, friends, bosses, teachers, children, and their former spouses. Typical experiences reported as

significant life changes included loss of income, loss of friends, new neighborhood, change in career or work status, relocation, and lack of social life. Further, parents reported that these significant life changes were viewed as problems relating to the divorce.

Communication between Parents

Parents indicated that the issues most problematic to resolve between themselves included money, children, and prior friendships with others from the marriage. Two interviewees reported that they discussed parenting issues with their former spouses at least once a day. However, the majority of the parents communicated with their former spouses either once a week or once a month. Three parents indicated that they initiated contact once every 3 months, while one reported a frequency of once a year. One respondent never communicated with the former spouse. Fourteen parents described their contact as by telephone. Two reported communication by letter, two by litigation, and two in the presence of a third party.

With respect to frequency of agreement on parenting issues, 11 parents reported that they agreed with their former spouses infrequently. Three indicated that they usually agreed and one parent never agreed. Of the 20 respondents, 13 disclosed that they usually or often argued regarding the children. Nine parents reported that they would not contact their former spouse in the event of a

personal emergency, while six indicated that they would do so. Five parents believed that they perhaps would call the other in a situation of emergency. Interestingly, despite the high level of disagreements reported, eight respondents reported that they discussed personal matters such as their social lives or issues with their own parents with their former spouses. Of the 20 parents, 15 described an atmosphere of tension and stress when they communicated with their former spouses.

Problem Resolution Between Former Spouses

The 20 parents interviewed acknowledged that within the six months prior to this interview non-legal changes were made in their visitation agreements one to more than five times with a mean number of changes of three. These changes were described in part as changes in time schedules, primary residence, or transportation differences. Moreover, 9 of the 20 respondents had been involved in custody litigation to resolve disputes. One parent had initiated litigation on three occasions subsequent to the divorce. Six had initiated litigation on at least one occasion, while two parents litigated their disputes twice since the divorce. In further explanation of the custody agreements of the parents, it was reported that 9 of the 20 parents held a belief that their former spouses did not adhere to the custody agreement often or usually. However, only 3 of the 20 parents reported a

similar frequency on the number of occurrences that they themselves did not adhere to the custody agreement.

Parental Conflict Behaviors

Of the 20 respondents, 13 indicated that there was frequently an atmosphere of tension or hostility present during their discussions with their former spouses about the children. One parent offered, "we start off talking about the kids and somehow we end up fighting about old problems." Further, half of the respondents described arguing with their former spouses in front of the children. Of the 20 interviewees, 17 reported that their former spouses spoke negatively about them to the children. Fourteen parents indicated that they believed their former spouses made disparaging remarks to the children about them, while 15 reported that although their former spouses did so, they themselves did not engage in such behaviors in the presence of the children. Typical of the remarks reported were: "well, you know your mother has always left you alone," "your father still drinks too much, I'll bet," "he's late again, you can see how much he really wants to be with you," and "looks like your father has gone off the deep end, dating all those girls who could be his daughters." Only one parent reported frequent physical violence perpetrated by the former spouse. However, seven indicated that physical violence by the former spouse

occurred about 50% of the time. Seventeen respondents denied any physical abuse toward their former spouses.

When required to attend school functions for the children, 17 parents indicated that both were in attendance. Further, of these 17, 7 parents arrived at the function separately, but sat together, while 8 arrived separately and sat separately. Two parents refused to go if the other one was in attendance. When asked by this interviewer to share other relevant post-divorce parental behaviors post-divorce, complaints of name calling in front of the children, nonpayment of child support, destruction of property, or nuisance calls or following to work were reported. For some parents, threats were made by their former spouses to their extended families, and for 5 of the 20 respondents, calls had been made by their former spouses to the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

Behavioral Responses to Divorce

Subsequent to obtaining the information from the 20 interviews, the behaviors were listed and charted for frequency and intensity. The Parental Post-Divorce Behavioral Checklist was constructed based on the behaviors described in Table 2. The checklist was then reviewed by two marriage and family therapists for completeness, clarity of behaviors, and appropriate reflections of their professional experiences of parent's post-divorce issues.

Table 2

Conflictual Behaviors of Parents

Conflict Behavior	<u>n</u>	Conflict Behavior	<u>n</u>
Name calling	12	Threatened on telephone	14
Nonpayment of child support	5	Followed former spouse or hired private investigator	3
Contacted protective services	5	Punched holes in wall	4
Contacted parents of former spouse	6		
Made threatening calls at work	12		

This phase of the study provided information which was analyzed for descriptive information about emotional experiences (see Table 3) and patterns of behavior of parents subsequent to divorce and for the construction of the Parental Post Divorce Behavioral Checklist. This Checklist, along with other instruments designed to provide data of each parent's experience of divorce, has been utilized in Phase II. A copy of the Checklist is found in Appendix C.

Table 3

Emotional Responses to Divorce

Emotion Experienced	At Divorce	Currently
Angry	16	12
Anxious	13	6
Bitter	13	8
Capable	3	11
Competent	3	11
Confused	19	7
Depressed	8	4
Desire to retaliate	11	5
Empty	6	2
Fearful	15	3
Happy	1	4
Healthy	1	5
Hurt	17	7
Jealous	6	4
Joyful	1	1
Pleased	0	2
Powerful	1	2
Relieved	4	6
Resentful	19	12
Sorry	11	6
Strong	1	1

Phase II

Demographic Information

Eighty participants provided information for Phase II of this study. Twenty-one were members of a singles organization in Central Florida, Outdoors and Active, 40 were members of Parents Without Partners, 10 were members of an interdenominational church singles organization, and 9 were members of Catholic divorce support groups. Forty men and 40 women participated. All participants had been divorced for at least 3 years with a range of time from 3 years to 18.5 years and a mean length of time divorced of 5.15 years. The ages of the respondents ranged from 24 to 60 years with a mean age of 35. The duration of the marriage ranged from 3 years to 25 years with a mean of 7.87 years. The mean age at the time of the marriage was 22.08 years with 1.95 children borne from the marriage. The mean current level of income was reported to be approximately \$27,000.00. Twenty-seven of the respondents reported to be the biological parent of one child, 34 were the parents of two children, 15 parents had three children, and 4 reported having four children from their marriages. The current ages of the children ranged from 3 to 35 years.

Four custody types were reported. Sixty-two of the 80 respondents participated in shared parental responsibility with the mother retaining primary residence. Eight mothers had sole custody, whereas only one father had the same.

Seven parents participated in shared parental responsibility with the father retaining primary residence of the children.

The types of occupations of the participants ranged from professional to unskilled. Nineteen participants reported professional careers, 21 had business or managerial careers, 24 worked in service oriented positions, 12 worked in skilled or clerical positions, and 4 reported that their occupations required no structured training. Of the spouse of the respondents, 1 was not employed, 14 were professional, 27 were business or managerial, 22 were in service occupations, 9 were skilled/clerical, and 7 were in unskilled occupations.

Nineteen of the 80 parents had sought therapy prior to the divorce. Of the 19, 12 engaged in marital counseling, 3 in individual counseling, 2 in family counseling, and 2 in group counseling. Subsequent to their divorces, interestingly, 40 of the 80 participants sought therapy. Twenty-two of the 40 entered individual counseling, 14 entered group counseling, 3 engaged in family counseling, and 1 participated in divorce mediation.

Of the 80 respondents, 47 reported that they mainly communicated with their former spouses by telephone, 3 by letter, 2 primarily by an attorney or the court system, 1 through a friend or relative, and 26 stated that they utilized a combination of methods to communicate with their

former spouses. Communication consisted of interaction with their former spouses twice a week for 2 of the respondents, while 22 reported once a week contact. In addition, 38 indicated that they interacted with their spouses once a month, with one parent indicating contact every two months. Five parents stated that they interacted less frequently than every two months. Finally, one respondent reported that there was no contact between them.

Variables

Descriptive statistics for the STAXI, SEI, and FDAS were computed for the sample in the study ($n=80$). Participants had a mean score of 24.82, $s.d.=10.72$, on the STAXI, the measure of anger expression. Based on normative data for male adults, a mean score of 24.82 on the STAXI indicated anger expression in the 80th percentile. These scores supported the findings of intense anger reported by many parents several years after divorce.

The mean score on the SEI, a measure of self esteem, was 18.73, $s.d.=6.68$, indicated a percentile rank of 16% standardized for adult males and 22% for adult females. These scores indicated low levels of self esteem for the entire sample. Interestingly, the mean score of 377.90, $s.d.=64.33$, on the FDAS, the measure of overall post-divorce adjustment, was well within the normal range of mean standardized scores for individuals who had been separated for more than 36 months. Thus, comparatively,

the responses of the parents in this sample fell within the average range for other adults who had experienced separation or divorce.

Scores on the CTS which measured conflict tactic strategies were computed for each of the three subscales (a) reasoning, (b) verbal conflict, and (c) violence. The mean score for the reasoning scale in this sample was 15.91, s.d.=6.30, which reflected a percentile rank of 70% based on normative data from non-clinical adults. In addition, a mean score of 28.05, s.d.=14.82, on the verbal conflict scale indicated that the parents in this study ranked in the 88th percentile based on standardized scores. Verbal conflict was well above the norm for these parents. A mean score on the violence scale of 5.18, s.d.=8.72, ranked the couples in the sample extremely high (95th percentile) as compared with non-divorced couples from which normative data was derived for the CTS. The remainder of this chapter will present the results of this study as they pertain to the research questions.

Research Questions

Question One

What is the extent of the expression of interparental conflict in the post-divorce period three years following a legal divorce? The results of the checklist reflected frequency of parental conflict behaviors. It is interesting that 42.5% of the males and 55% of the females

in the study reported that at least half the time they agreed with their former spouses regarding parenting issues. Almost twice as many women (n=17) as men (n=11) reported that half the time their former spouses engaged in name calling but both males and females indicated that they themselves infrequently demonstrated the same behaviors.

Similarly, one third of the men and nearly half the women reported that 50% of the time their former spouses engaged in subtle, brainwashing behaviors to negatively influence the children, while they themselves rarely utilized the same behaviors. Thus, both men and women perceived that the other spouse engaged in conflict behaviors designed to influence the children negatively about the other spouse, while they themselves did not.

Another behavior which may be utilized to express parental conflict is the reporting of the other parent to the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) for inappropriate parenting of the minor children. In this study one male reported that he called HRS more than three times, three males called more than two times and three males indicated that they called HRS on at least one occasion. Women reported similar numbers of calls. Overall, 20% of the parents had called HRS to report their former spouses.

Custody litigation subsequent to divorce has been identified as a method of perpetuating parental conflict.

Twelve of the 40 men (30%) have litigated divorce issues after the dissolution of marriage. In fact, two indicated that they had litigated on more than three occasions. Sixteen of the women (40%) had litigated since their divorces.

Conflict behaviors for both the individual and the former spouse in the last year were described on the Couples Conflict Questionnaire. Frequency and intensity were examined to provide information on specific conflict strategies utilized by parents. Many of the conflict strategies included such behaviors as insulting, swearing, sulking, stomping out of the house or yard, or throwing objects. Four of the 40 men had hit their former spouses, nine had pushed or shoved them, and one man had threatened to use a gun or a knife during conflict. In comparison, eight of the women had hit their former spouses, 17 had pushed or shoved them, three women had threatened to use a gun or a knife, and one woman had actually used a gun or knife during conflict.

Question Two

Is there an association between gender and the use of reasoning, verbal, or violent conflict strategies?

Question 2 provides more specific information about conflict tactic styles and gender. Three chi squares were calculated to determine if a relationship existed between gender and the use of reasoning conflict, verbal conflict,

and physical violence in interparental conflicts. These analyses are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

A chi square was computed to determine association between gender scores on the Reasoning Scale of the Couples Conflict Questionnaire. There was not a significant association between gender and reasoning (chi square=4.195, $p=.12$).

Table 4

Chi Square of the Relationship Between Gender and Reasoning Conflict Styles

Sex	Reasoning Conflict			
	low	medium	high	TOTAL
Frequency				
Percent				
Row Pct.				
Col. Pct.				
Male	8	12	20	40
	10.00	15.00	25.00	50.00
	20.00	30.00	50.00	
	33.33	52.17	60.61	
Female	16	11	13	40
	20.00	13.75	16.25	50.00
	40.00	27.50	32.50	
	66.67	47.83	30.39	
TOTAL	24	23	33	80
	30.00	28.75	41.25	100.00

Chi Square = 4.195, $p = .12$

Table 5

Chi Square of the Relationship Between Gender and Verbal Conflict Style

Sex	Verbal Conflict			
	low	medium	high	TOTAL
Frequency				
Percent				
Row Pct.				
Col. Pct.				
Male	17	11	12	40
	21.25	13.75	15.00	50.00
	42.50	27.50	30.00	
	65.38	40.74	44.44	
Female	9	16	15	40
	11.25	20.00	18.75	50.00
	22.50	40.00	37.50	
	34.62	59.26	55.56	
TOTAL	26	27	27	80
	32.50	33.75	33.75	100.00

Chi Square = 3.72, $p = .15$

A chi square was also computed to explore an association between gender and verbal conflict strategies (see Table 5). Examination of the results indicated that there was no significant association between gender and verbal conflict strategies (chi square=3.72, $p=.15$).

A chi square was calculated to determine an association between gender and levels of violent and nonviolent conflict strategies. Categories of violent and

nonviolent were established according to the presence or absence of any reported violent incidents after divorce in the year prior to this study. Examination of the results of the chi square revealed that no significant association was present ($\chi^2=1.25$, $p=.26$).

Table 6

Chi Square of the Relationship of Gender and Violent Conflict Strategies

Sex	Violent Conflict		
	Violent	Nonviolent	TOTAL
Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct.			
Col. Pct.			
Male	23 28.75 57.50 56.10	17 21.75 42.50 43.59	40 50.00
Female	18 22.50 45.00 43.90	22 27.50 55.00 56.41	40 50.00
TOTAL	41 51.25	39 48.75	80 100.00

Chi Square = 1.25, $p = .26$

Question Three

Can parental conflict tactic style be predicted from levels of anger expression, self-esteem, and post-divorce

adjustment? As a first step to the regression analyses a Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix was computed for levels of anger expression, self-esteem, overall post-divorce adjustment, as well as for the reasoning, verbal, and violent conflict tactic strategies. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Independent and Dependent Variables

	FDAS	STAXI	SEI	VERBC	VIOL	REAS
FDAS	1.000 .0000	-0.38 .0004	.57 .0001	-.53 .0001	-.45 .0001	.15 .17
STAXI	-.38 .0004	1.000 .0000	-.57 .0001	.48 .0001	.47 .0001	-.30 .008
SEI	.57 .0001	-.57 .0001	1.000 .0000	-.70 .0001	-.71 .0001	.25 .03
VERBC	-.53 .0001	.48 .0001	-.70 .0001	1.000 .0000	.69 .0001	-.33 .003
VIOL	-.45 .0001	.47 .0001	-.71 .0001	.69 .0001	1.000 .000	-.31 .005
REAS	.15 .17	-.30 .008	.25 .03	-.33 .003	-.31 .005	1.000 .000

In this sample, the scores on the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory, the Culture-Free Self Esteem Inventory, and the Fisher Post Divorce Adjustment Scale were highly intercorrelated. As shown in Table 8, as post-

divorce adjustment increases, anger decreases ($r=-0.38$, $p=.0004$) and self-esteem increases ($r=.57$, $p=.0001$). As anger increases, self-esteem decreases ($r=-.57$, $p=.0001$).

Table 8

Regression Model of the Relationship Between Independent Variables and Verbal Conflict Style

Parameter	Estimate	t For HO:	PR> t	Std.Error
Parameter=0				
Intercept	62.586	6.645	.0001	9.419
STAXI	0.140	1.034	.3046	0.135
SEI	-1.186	-4.853	.0001	0.244
FDAS	-0.041	-1.855	.067	0.022

F = 27.026, $p = .0001$, R-Square = .50 Dep Mean = 28.05

The independent variables were also significantly correlated with the dependent variables of reasoning strategies, verbal conflict strategies, and violent conflict strategies. Post-divorce adjustment correlated negatively with verbal conflict and violent conflict ($r=-.53$, $p=.0001$, and $r=-.45$, $p=.0001$, respectively) as did self-esteem ($r=-.70$, $p=.0001$, and $r=-.71$, $p=.0001$, respectively). Anger expression correlated positively with verbal and violent conflict ($r=.48$, $p=.0001$, and $r=.47$, $p=.0001$, respectively). Finally, there was a negative

correlation ($r=-.30$, $p=.008$) between anger expression and reasoning conflict strategies and a positive correlation between self-esteem and reasoning strategies ($r=.25$, $p=.03$).

The relationship of the three dependent variables were also statistically significant. Verbal conflict strategies positively correlated with violent conflict ($r=.69$, $p=.0001$). However, there were negative correlations between verbal conflict and reasoning strategies ($r=-.33$, $p=.003$) and violent conflict and reasoning strategies ($r=-.31$, $p=.005$).

A multiple regression analysis was computed to predict use of verbal conflict strategies by knowledge of scores on the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory, Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory, and the Fisher Post Divorce Adjustment Scale. The results were highly significant, ($F=27.03$, $p=.0001$) with an R^2 equal to .50. This indicated that 50% of the variance in the use of verbal conflict strategies was accounted for by this model. As shown in Table 8, the level of self-esteem was the only significant ($p=.0001$) predictor. Higher self-esteem scores in this sample were predictive of low use of verbal conflict strategies.

Likewise, a multiple regression was calculated to predict use of violent conflict strategies by knowledge of STAXI, SEI, and FDAS scores. The results were highly

significant ($F=26.44$, $p=.0001$) with an R^2 equal to .49. Thus, 49% of the variance in this sample on the use of violent conflict strategies was accounted for by the model. As shown in Table 9, only self-esteem levels (SEI) were significant ($p=.0001$). High SEI scores in this sample were predictors of low use of violent conflict strategies.

A third multiple regression analysis was computed to predict the use of reasoning as a conflict strategy by knowledge of STAXI, SEI, and FDAS scores (Table 10). The model was not statistically significant ($F= 2.67$, $p= 0.52$). Thus, use of reasoning strategies could not be predicted from STAXI, SEI, and FDAS scores.

Table 9

Regression Model of the Relationship Between Independent Variables and Violent Conflict Style

Parameter	Estimate	t For HO:	PR > t	Std. Error
Parameter = 0				
Intercept	22.060	3.956	.0002	5.577
STAXI	0.067	0.837	.4050	0.080
SEI	-0.817	-5.648	.0001	0.145
FDAS	-0.008	-0.639	.5256	0.013

$F = 26.44$, $p = .0001$, $R\text{-Square} = .49$, $\text{Dep Mean} = 5.19$

Table 10

Regression Model of the Relationship Between Independent Variables and Reasoning Strategies

Parameter	Estimate	t For HO: Parameter = 0	PR> t	Std. Error
Intercept	17.266	3.151	0.002	5.479
STAXI	-0.135	-1.721	.0894	0.078
SEI	0.106	0.748	.4567	0.142
FDAS	0.0000	0.002	.9981	0.013

F = 2.678 , p = .0521 , R-Square = .06 , Dep mean = 15.91

Summary of Results

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that patterns of parental conflict behaviors continue long after divorce. Many of the conflicts involved making disparaging remarks about the former spouse in the presence of the children, calling HRS, custody litigation, threatening the former spouse, insulting or swearing at the former spouse, or using violence during conflict with the former spouse. In this study, use of different types of conflict strategy did not vary by gender. In fact, both men and women tended to report that while they did not engage in conflict behaviors, their ex-spouses did. However, men reported the

use of more incidents of violent conflict strategy, while women reported more use of verbal conflict strategies.

With respect to the prediction of the use of reasoning, verbal, or violent conflict strategies, only self-esteem was a significant predictor. Self-esteem was found to be a very strong predictor of verbal ($r=.50$) and violent ($r=.49$) conflict strategies. No significant predictors were found for reasoning conflict strategies.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

This study was an examination of the nature of post-divorce conflict three or more years following divorce. An additional purpose was to explore the possible relationships among dimensions of anger expression, level of self-esteem, and overall post-divorce adjustment with the types of conflict behaviors exhibited by parents. It was specifically designed to (a) describe the behaviors demonstrated by divorced parents; (b) explore the style of the conflict behaviors by gender; and (c) determine whether variables such as anger expression, self-esteem, and post-divorce adjustment could predict the conflict strategies of parents.

Discussion of Sample

A total of 100 parents who had been divorced a minimum of three years and who were the biological parents of at least one child with their former spouses agreed to participate in this study. For phase I of the study, 20 parents described their experiences of divorce in a structured interview conducted by this researcher. From the information obtained in these interviews, a parental

post-divorce checklist was designed to attempt to investigate more fully the experiences of divorced parents.

In phase II, 80 parents completed questionnaires about their anger expression style, level of self-esteem, overall post-divorce adjustment, conflict tactic strategies, and parental behaviors after divorce. All of the participants were involved in support groups for divorced individuals.

The sample in this study was similar to the middle class sample reported by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989). However, those researchers excluded from their study those families with high interparental conflict. Similarly, Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1978) conducted a longitudinal study of white, middle class families as did Kaslow and Schwartz (1987).

Discussion of Results

Approximately 40% of the sample reported ongoing parental conflict. These findings do not support current divorce stage theories as described by Kaslow (1984), Kessler (1975), or Weiss (1975). According to these theorists, the post-divorce recovery phase is characterized by acceptance, confidence, energy, wholeness, independence, and autonomy.

Consistent with the findings of Johnston and Campbell (1988) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), the results of this study indicated that conflict after divorce persisted long after the three to four year period believed to be an

adequate transition period after divorce. In fact, information obtained from this study supported the notion that many years later divorced parents continue to express their conflict through the children. The conflict behaviors reported in this study are even higher than those described by Johnston and Campbell (1988). In their study of highly conflicted post-divorce families they found that one-third of the 80 families remained hostile and bitter subsequent to divorce.

This study revealed that approximately half of the participants agreed with their former spouses regarding parenting issues; however, 27% of the men and 42.5% of the women reported that at least half the time their former spouses name-called or made disparaging remarks about them to their children. Additionally, 40% of the parents in this study reported that half the time their former spouses engaged in subtle, brainwashing of the children regarding the other parent. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1988) referred to this phenomena as the Medea syndrome. Gardner (1987) has identified the conflict as parental alienation syndrome. This syndrome is promulgated by the parents and is designed to denigrate the other parent in the eyes of the child.

A finding that has not been reported in the divorce literature to date that was found in this study was the frequency with which reports to the Department of Health

and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) were made during the post-divorce conflict. What is not known is the number of incidents where the reports were substantiated. Custody litigation was also identified as a method of managing conflict. In fact, 30% of the men and 40% of the women had been involved in litigation since the divorce. It is not known who initiated the litigation or for what reason.

It was surprising to find the intensity of the conflict reported by the participants in this study. Many of the conflict strategies included behaviors such as insulting, swearing, sulking, stomping out of the house or yard, or throwing objects. Four of the 40 men had hit their former spouses, 9 had pushed or shoved them, and 1 man threatened to use a knife or gun during a conflict. Eight of the 40 women had hit their former spouses, 17 had pushed or shoved them, 3 women had threatened to use a gun or a knife, and 1 had actually used a gun or knife in parental conflict.

This study also explored possible gender differences in the behaviors associated with parental conflict. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences by gender within each type of conflict strategy. There were only slightly higher reported incidents of verbal conflict expressed by women, and slightly higher incidents of physical violence expressed by men.

Unique to this study was the attempt to predict post divorce conflict tactic style. As expected from the review of the literature, variables of anger expression, level of self-esteem, and overall post-divorce adjustment were found to be important factors associated with parental conflict after divorce. In addition, correlations between the independent variables were highly significant. Moreover, as post-divorce adjustment increases, anger expression decreases. As post-divorce adjustment increases, self-esteem also increases. When self-esteem is high, anger expression is low.

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the variables of anger expression, self-esteem, and post-divorce adjustment were highly significant in predicting the level of verbal and violent parental conflict. This finding supports the conclusions drawn by Johnston and Campbell (1988) regarding highly conflicted families in the aftermath of divorce. They contended that parents utilized conflict to manage loss, anger, rejection, and hopelessness. The variable most strongly predictive of conflict appeared to be the degree of self-esteem held by the individual. Johnston and Campbell (1988) described narcissistic vulnerability associated with threats to self-esteem as a prime contributor to parental conflict.

For some parents, divorce is experienced as an assault on self. Thus, the need to use the former spouse to

regulate self-esteem may be evident. One regulator of self-esteem, according to the researchers, may be the custody dispute. The dispute may provide a defense of self against the sense of failure, rejection, and humiliation engendered by the divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

In contrast to the previous findings of Johnston and Campbell (1988) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), it was surprising that in this study anger was not found to be as strong a predictor of conflict style as self-esteem. Examination of the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory revealed a mean score of 24.82, which suggested that levels of anger were high. Additional information must be obtained to more clearly understand the dimension of anger and the association of conflict strategies.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study must be considered within the context of the sample, geographical location, and the instrumentation utilized. For example, all of the participants were volunteers and were involved in divorce support groups at the time of this study. The results may have been different with a wider sample and without the sample bias of self-selection. In addition, the sample was solely drawn from Central Florida which is primarily a Southern city although the majority of the inhabitants are originally from other regions in the country. The sample,

however, may only be generalizable to other similar locations.

Instrumentation was also a limitation in this study. All instruments were self-report questionnaires. These are limited by the desire of the participants to answer them truthfully and accurately. Finally, there was a large discrepancy between how the respondents rated themselves and their former spouses on the Parental Post-Divorce Behavioral Checklist. For the most part, it seemed that individuals represented themselves in a more appropriate manner than they represented the behaviors of their former spouses.

Although all attempts were made to provide appropriate measures for the dimensions in this study, it is acknowledged that some family therapy instruments do not have adequate information on the validity and reliability or sufficient norms on which to base current findings. For example, there were no available norms for parents who had been divorced a minimum of three years for the STAXI, SEI, or CTS. Consequently, data on validity and reliability was insufficient.

Conclusions

Overall, the results of this study indicated that divorced parents continued their conflicts well after the three-year period described by most stage theorists as the time required to complete the emotional divorce process.

These conflicts frequently involved the children. Further, the conflicts in many cases were violent; that is, 58% of the men in this study reported incidents of violence, while 45% of the women reported violent strategies. Women, however, indicated more incidents of verbal conflict (38%) than the men (30%). Dimensions of anger expression, self esteem, and overall post-divorce adjustment were found to be highly correlated. In addition, self-esteem was found to be predictive of post-divorce conflict style.

These results have important implications for counseling both prior to and subsequent to divorce. The willingness for participants to complete five questionnaires and discuss freely their divorce experiences suggests a need to understand and share their divorce stories. Further, the results indicate a need for support groups for divorced individuals to continue well after the three-year period following divorce. Prime goals for these post-divorce programs would be to elevate self-esteem in each participant and address conflict tactic strategies and the appropriate management of parental conflict for divorced parents.

In individual counseling the counselor should be cognizant of the need for a thorough assessment of the emotional issues of each individual. Based on this study, there is a need to pay close attention to the self-worth issues of the divorcing individuals and design intervention

strategies to address such vulnerabilities. The strong relationship between self-esteem, anger, and post-divorce adjustment suggests that if self-esteem increases, adjustment will be higher and anger will decrease.

Counselors in all settings who work with this population must be cognizant of the fragile self-esteem of their clients who seek counseling during divorce or during intense marital conflict. Preventive interventions may be appropriate at that time. It would be important for counselors to ascertain the degree of depression, feelings of helplessness, or hopelessness the client experiences so that corrective emotional experiences may be initiated.

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this study have implications for further research. Additional assessment instruments and normative data are needed to gain information on parental conflict style. Specifically, it would be useful to gather information on litigation as a method of conflict. The motivation for the initiation of the litigation and the parent who more frequently litigates must be determined in order to design strategies to specifically address the dilemma. Similarly, it would be useful to examine the parental report to the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services to determine the frequency of founded incidents and false allegations.

It would also be of interest to explore the relationships between anger and conflict since that variable is reported most frequently in the literature as associated with parental conflict. The investigation should include further study of Gardner's Parental Alienation Syndrome and the effects of the syndrome on children. Other research might include the reexamination of stage theories of divorce or, at least, additional explanations of the stages to encompass the circularity of anger and conflict throughout the divorce process.

Finally, it would be useful to investigate appropriate interventions for counselors and to provide empirical evidence for methodologies designed to enhance self esteem and reduce anger after divorce. Parenting seminars made available by the court system could also address these issues and could educate parents on useful strategies for successful conflict management and strategies with their former spouses.

Summary

In conclusion, the patterns of divorced parents were described and examined well after the three-year period defined in the literature as the post-divorce recovery stage characterized by acceptance, self-confidence, energy, wholeness, independence, and autonomy. In addition, dimensions of anger expression, self-esteem, and post-divorce adjustment were examined to determine their ability

to predict parental conflict subsequent to divorce. The study also investigated the levels of conflict and conflict tactic style according to gender.

The results indicated that conflict persisted long after the three-year period reported as sufficient for a successful emotional divorce. In fact, a high number of parents reported violent conflict strategies many of which involved their children. There was some evidence that parents utilize the court system and Health and Rehabilitative Services to promote their conflict after divorce. In addition, there was evidence to support the behaviors defined by Gardner as Parental Alienation Syndrome in the post-divorce recovery period. There was not, however, support for variance of conflict strategies according to gender. Men reported slightly higher violent conflict strategies, while women indicated slightly higher incidents of verbal conflict. These findings were not statistically significant.

Analysis of dimensions of anger expression, self-esteem, and post-divorce adjustment revealed that there was a predictive relationship for levels of conflict. Particularly, the dimension of self-esteem seemed noteworthy in this study. It is clear that these results have strong implications for further research on post-divorce adjustment and parental conflict. Moreover, there

is a need to examine and describe more comprehensively the stage models of divorce.

The results also indicate a need for additional assessment instruments and intervention strategies for individual and group counseling. Counselors who facilitate divorce support groups must also be cognizant of these findings to design more appropriate intervention strategies for participants in the programs. Finally, there are implications for the court system for amelioration of the frequency of modification and enforcement proceedings and for the uniformity of case law to protect children in highly conflicted families.

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APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age: _____ Age at Marriage: _____
2. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female
3. Length of time legally divorced: _____
4. Length of time previously married: _____
5. Number of children from the marriage: _____
6. Ages of the children from the marriage: _____
7. Custody type: _____ sole custody (mother)
_____ sole custody (father)
_____ shared parenting, child resides
_____ primarily with mother
_____ shared parenting, child resides
_____ primarily with father
8. Occupation: _____
9. Occupation of former spouse: _____
10. Level of income: _____ 0-\$15,999
_____ \$16,000-\$25,999
_____ \$26,000-\$35,999
_____ \$36,000-\$49,999
_____ \$50,000 up
11. Did you receive any therapy or counseling during your divorce? Yes _____ No _____
If so, what type of treatment?

12. Did you receive any therapy or counseling after your divorce? Yes _____ No _____
If so, what type of treatment?

13. Do you receive or pay child support from/to your former spouse? _____
14. How frequently do you and your former spouse communicate? _____
15. By what means do you and your former spouse communicate (phone, letter, third party, etc.)? _____

APPENDIX B
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

birth date_____ sex_____ age at marriage_____
age at divorce_____
level of education for self_____, for former
spouse_____
marital status of former spouse_____
occupation_____
occupation of former spouse_____
number of children from the marriage_____
primary legal custodian of the children_____
length of time since the divorce_____
Issues were resolved during the divorce by:
mediation_____ litigation_____ own agreement_____
still unsettled_____
Did you seek therapy during the marriage to resolve marital
issues?_____
Did you seek therapy after the divorce to resolve
individual divorce issues?_____

Please answer these general questions about your divorce experience:

1. How are you currently adjusting to being divorced?
☐ poorly
☐ with some difficulty
☐ adequately
☐ with ease
☐ well-adjusted
2. Who currently offers you emotional support?
3. How has your divorce experience changed your life?
4. What are the major problems you have experienced since your divorce which you believe are related to the divorce?
5. Which issues are most difficult for you to resolve between you and your former spouse?

The following questions are about your post-divorce parenting style:

6. How often do you and your former spouse communicate about the children?
7. By what means do you and your former spouse communicate (phone, letter, third party, etc.)?
8. How frequently are the two of you able to agree regarding parenting issues?
- ___ usually
___ often
___ half the time
___ infrequently
___ never
9. When you and your former spouse discuss parenting issues, how often does an argument result?
- ___ usually
___ often
___ half the time
___ infrequently
___ never
10. Would you contact your former spouse in the event of a personal emergency? ___yes ___no ___perhaps

11. How often is there an atmosphere of hostility and anger when you and your former spouse discuss the children?

☐ usually
☐ often
☐ half the time
☐ infrequently
☐ never

12. Do you and your former spouse discuss your personal lives?

If so, what aspects of your personal lives do you discuss?

13. How frequently is there an atmosphere of tension and stress when you and your former spouse communicate?

☐ usually
☐ often
☐ half the time
☐ infrequently
☐ never

14. Do you and your former spouse have differences of opinion regarding child rearing? ☐ yes ☐ no

If so, describe them from your perspective.

15. If you needed assistance for your child, would you seek it from your former spouse? ___yes ___no ___perhaps
16. Would your former spouse seek assistance from you if assistance was needed regarding the children?
17. How frequently are non-legal changes made in the visitation agreement? (number in the last six months)
18. Have you and your former spouse been involved in custody litigation since your divorce as a way to resolve parenting problems? ___yes ___no
If so, how many? _____
19. Does your former spouse praise you in front of the children? ___yes ___no
20. Do you praise your former spouse in the presence of the children? ___yes ___no
21. How frequently do you:
- (a) argue in front of the children?
- ___usually
___often
___half the time
___infrequently
___never
- (b) raise your voice in front of the children?
- ___usually
___often
___half the time
___infrequently
___never

22. Does your former spouse make disparaging remarks about you to the children? ☐yes ☐no
23. Do you make disparaging remarks about your former spouse in front of the children? ☐yes ☐no
24. How often does your former spouse prevent you from following the visitation agreement?
- ☐usually
- ☐often
- ☐half the time
- ☐infrequently
- ☐never
25. How often do you prevent the adherence to the visitation agreement?
- ☐usually
- ☐often
- ☐half the time
- ☐infrequently
- ☐never
26. How frequently does your former spouse act physically violent toward you in the presence of your children?
- ☐usually
- ☐often
- ☐half the time
- ☐infrequently
- ☐never

What behaviors of violence are used, if any?

27. How frequently do you act physically violent toward your former spouse in the presence of the children?

☐ usually

☐ often

☐ half the time

☐ infrequently

☐ never

What behaviors of violence are used, if any?

28. Do you and your former spouse attend the school functions of your children? ☐ yes ☐ no

If so, do you ☐ attend separately, but sit together

☐ both go, but sit separately

☐ go together, and sit together

☐ refuse to go if the other parent goes?

29. How frequently does your former spouse speak negatively about you to the children?

☐ usually

☐ often

☐ half the time

☐ infrequently

☐ never

30. Please share with me anything about your experiences with the divorce that you think are important.

Please read this list of feelings people may experience during or after divorce. Indicate which feelings were characteristic of you at the time of the divorce and which of the feelings are characteristic of you now.

At divorce

Currently

Angry
Anxious
Bitter
Capable
Competent
Confused
Depressed
Desire to retaliate
Empty
Fearful
Happy
Healthy
Hurt
Jealous
Joyful
Pleased
Powerful
Relieved
Resentful
Sorry
Strong

APPENDIX C
PARENTAL POST-DIVORCE BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST

Please read each statement describing various parental behaviors demonstrated by parents during the post-divorce period. Respond by indicating with an "X" the frequency with which the following behaviors occur.

1. My former spouse and I agree regarding the parenting of the children.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never
2. My former spouse and I discuss our personal lives with each other.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never
3. My former spouse and I contact each other in the event of a personal crisis.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never
4. There is tension when my former spouse and I communicate with each other.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never
5. I seek emotional support from my former spouse regarding the children.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never
6. My former spouse name-calls or makes disparaging remarks about me in the presence of the children.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never
7. I name-call or make disparaging remarks about my former spouse in the presence of the children.
☐ usually ☐ often ☐ half the time
☐ infrequently ☐ never

8. My former spouse refuses to allow me to speak with the children when they are in his/her care.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
9. I refuse to allow my former spouse to speak with the children when they are in my care.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
10. My former spouse praises me in the presence of the children.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
11. I praise my former spouse in the presence of the children.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
12. My former spouse and I have been involved in custody litigation since the divorce.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
13. My former spouse does not comply with the custody agreement.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
14. I do not comply with the custody agreement.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
15. My former spouse and I attend child-related functions together.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
16. Either myself or my spouse have reported the other spouse to the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services alleging abuse or neglect of the children.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
17. My former spouse and I discuss the needs of the children.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never

18. My former spouse believes that I do not care for the children's needs appropriately.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
19. I do not believe that my former spouse cares for the children's needs appropriately.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
20. My former spouse engages in subtle brainwashing to negatively influence the children about me.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
21. I engage in subtle brainwashing to negatively influence my children about my former spouse.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
22. My parents speak positively about my former spouse in the presence of the children.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
23. My former spouse's parents speak positively about me in the presence of the children.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
24. I describe my spouse as a "good parent" since my divorce.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never
25. My former spouse describes me as a "good parent" since my divorce.
___ usually ___ often ___ half the time
___ infrequently ___ never

APPENDIX D
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, and I am conducting a study of the experiences of parents after divorce. As a divorced parent, I know that it requires a delicate balance to be a single parent and make time for oneself.

The purpose of this study is to examine the issues that individual parents experience with their former spouses and with their children after divorce. These issues include feelings of anger, loss of self-esteem, agreement and disagreement, and overall post-divorce adjustment.

Those parents who have been divorced at least three years, have not remarried, and who have at least one biological child with their former spouse are appropriate for this study. Further, I am not asking that your former spouse participate in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary with no monetary compensation. Participation involves the completion of five questionnaires and one hour of your time. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. Do not put your signature on the answer sheets. All responses are anonymous. Please answer the questions at home and return them to me. For your prompt response, I have provided a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The information you are providing will assist professionals in designing appropriate programs for those persons experiencing the divorce process. Please feel free to contact me by telephone if you have any questions. My phone numbers are 851-2173 or 896-7221. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Lynn L. Landis

APPENDIX E
COUPLE CONFLICT QUESTIONNAIRE

Although couples divorce, there are times when they disagree over personal or child-related issues. Please read each statement describing various methods of disagreement and respond by circling the appropriate number which corresponds with the methods you have utilized in the last year. Then circle the appropriate number which corresponds with the method utilized by your former spouse during the last year. Finally, circle the appropriate response regarding the methods each of you utilized during your marriage.

IN THE LAST YEAR:

1=once
2=twice
3=3-5 times
4=6-10 times
5=11-20 times
6=more than 20

	SELF	FORMER SPOUSE
A. Discussed an issue calmly	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
B. Got information to back up your/his/her side of things	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
C. Brought in, or tried to bring in someone to try to settle things	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
D. Insulted or swore at him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
E. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6

F.	Stomped out of the room, house, or yard	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
G.	Cried	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
H.	Did or said something to spite him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
I.	Threatened to hit or throw something at him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
J.	Threw, smashed, hit or kicked something	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
K.	Threw something at him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
L.	Pushed, grabbed or shoved him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
M.	Slapped him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
N.	Kicked, bit or hit him/her/you with a fist	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
O.	Hit or tried to hit him/her/you with something	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
P.	Beat him/her/you up	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
Q.	Choked him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
R.	Threatened him/her you with a knife or gun	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
S.	Used a knife or fired a gun	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6

Now circle the appropriate response indicating how often you or your former spouse utilized these methods of disagreement during your marriage.

DURING YOUR MARRIAGE:

1=once
2=twice
3=3-5 times
4=6-10 times
5=11-20 times
6=more than 20

	SELF	FORMER SPOUSE
A. Discussed an issue calmly	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
B. Got information to back up your/his/her side of things	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
C. Brought in, or tried to bring in, someone to help settle things	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
D. Insulted or swore at him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
E. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
F. Stomped out of the room, house or yard	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
G. Cried	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
H. Did or said something to spite him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
I. Threatened to hit or throw something at him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
J. Threw, smashed, hit or kicked something	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
K. Threw something at him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
L. Pushed, grabbed or shoved him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6

M.	Slapped him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
N.	Kicked, bit or hit him/her/you with a fist	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
O.	Hit or tried to hit him/her/you with something	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
P.	Beat him/her/you up	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
Q.	Choked him/her/you	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
R.	Threatened him/her you with a knife or gun	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6
S.	Used a knife or fired a gun	1-2-3-4-5-6	1-2-3-4-5-6

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lynn L. Landis was born on January 2, 1949, in Orlando, Florida. She is the daughter of Mary Thomas Littleford and J. Louis Lamberton. She is married to Charles Wyre and has three children, Drew Landis, Evan Landis, and Justin Wyre.

In 1966, Lynn graduated from William R. Boone High School in Orlando, Florida. She attended Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia and was graduated in 1970, with an A.B. degree in Spanish Education. In 1981, Lynn graduated from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida with a master's degree in counseling and human development. She then enrolled at the University of Florida to pursue studies toward a specialist degree, which she received in 1987, and doctoral degree in Counselor Education.

Currently, Lynn is a licensed marriage and family therapist and has maintained a private practice in Orlando, Florida for 12 years. She has served as the Orange County Child Abuse Prevention Coordinator and has been active on various task forces for the prevention of child abuse.

In addition, Lynn has served on the Florida Bar Committee for the Legal Needs of Children and the Orange

County Children of Divorce Task Force. Her professional activities include clinical membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and membership in the Florida Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

Lynn was named to Outstanding Young Women of America, Who's Who and Why of Successful Florida Women, Who's Who in the South and Southwest, and International Leaders in Achievement. In 1989, she received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Rollins College School of Counseling and Human Development.

Training and Counselor Development has been a focus of Lynn's professional life. She has presented numerous workshops on topics including children of divorce and therapeutic interventions for abusive families at the local, regional, and national levels. These professional interests have been reflected by her coauthoring articles published in the Journal of Counseling and Development and The Florida Bar Journal.

Lynn's leisure time is spent with her family and friends. Her hobbies include travel, snowskiing, interior decorating, reading, walking along the beach, and hiking.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Margaret L. Fong, Chairperson
Associate Professor of
Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

James H. Pitts, Cochairperson
Assistant Professor of
Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Leonard Beeghley, II
Professor of Sociology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Peter A. Sherrard
Assistant Professor of Counselor
Education

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 1991

Dean, College of Education

Dean, Graduate School